

The Struggle for Power in the
'Abbāsid Caliphate
between 247/861 and 256/870

by

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ABSTRACT

In the historical study of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate, the period between the years 247-256/861-870, when the whole structure of the Islamic State threatened to collapse into self-destructive anarchy, is probably the most neglected. The four Caliphs who reigned during this period of instability have been largely ignored by scholars as it was thought that their rule was little more than an irrational interlude in the history of 'Abbāsid domination. However, this thesis is an attempt to demonstrate that, on the contrary, both the decade itself and the consequences resulting from the internal politico-social struggles are indeed of sufficient value and relevance to merit a detailed study of this nature.

Certain new materials still in manuscript form were used, but, in general, the study relied on the standard histories of al-Ṭabarī, al-Ya'qūbī, etc., and from these it was attempted to extract and organize the information relevant to the problems presented by the period.

The information for the study of this period is unusually abundant, much of it recorded in first-hand accounts, from which it is possible to discover the origins and nature of the political upheavals which are documented. These materials also clarify the complicated course of events and the shifting alliances and hostilities among the various participating parties. Studied in this way, the period throws into prominence the serious defects innate in the internal structure of the Caliphate, in its conception of

power as well as in the way this power was used. The fact that it was able to overcome these weaknesses was due to certain constitutional changes which obliged the Caliphs to enforce their authority over Iraq rather than over the Empire as a whole, thus providing the basis for a national Iraqi state. In this respect, the anarchy can be seen as the trauma of adjustment to a new order.

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SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION

In this thesis the system of transliteration adopted is that of the new edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam with minor changes:-

ع	,	ض	ḍ
ا	ā	ط	ṭ
ب	b	ظ	ẓ
ت	t	ع	‘
ث	th	غ	gh
ج	j	ف	f
ح	h	ق	q
خ	Kh	ك	k
د	d	ل	l
ذ	dh	م	m
ر	r	ن	n
ز	z	ه	h
س	s	و	w
ش	sh	ي	y
ص	ṣ		

When the definite article 'al' is preceded by a vowel, the 'a' in al is not elided but remains as 'al'.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

a) Manuscripts and Primary Sources.

- Aghani. Al-Isfahānī, Abū al-Faraj (d. 365/975), Kitāb al-Aghānī, 20 Vols., Bulaq, 1285/1868.
- Azdi. Al-Azdī, Abū Zakariyya, Yazīd b. Muḥammad (d. 334/945), Ta'rīkh al-Mawṣil, Vol. II ed. by 'Alī Ḥabība, Cairo, 1387/1967.
- Baghdad. Al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071), Ta'rīkh Baghdad, 14 Vols., Cairo, 1349/1931.
- Dhahabi, Tarikh. Al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn (d. 748/1347), Ta'rīkh al-Islam wa Mashāhīr al-A'lām, (Vols. X-XIII), Ms. Dar al-Kutub, No. 42 Ta'rīkh, Cairo.
- Fakhri. Ibn al-Taḡṭṭā, Muḥammad b. 'Alī (d. 709/1309), al-Fakhrī fī al-Adāb al-Sultāniyya, Cairo, 1317 A.H.
- Fihrist. Ibn al-Nadīm, Muḥammad b. Ishāq, (d. 377/987), Kitāb al-Fihrist, Cairo, 1929.
- Ibar. Ibn Khaldūn, 'Abd al-Rahmān (d. 804/1406), Kitāb al-'Ibar, Cairo, 7 Vols., 1284-87 A.H.
- Ibn Isfandiyar. Ibn Isfandiyār, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan, Ta'rīkh-i Ṭabaristān, trans. by E.G. Browne, History of Ṭabaristan, London, 1905.

- Ibn Kathir. Ibn Kathīr, Ismā'īl b. 'Umar (d. 774/1373), al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya fī al-Ta'rīkh, 14 Vols., Beirut, 1966.
- Isfahani, Tarikh. Isfahānī, Ḥamza b. al-Ḥasan (d. 350-360/961-971), Kitāb Ta'rīkh sinī Mulūk al-Arīd wa al-Anbiyā', Beirut, n.d.
- Jahshiyari. Al-Jahshiyārī, Muḥammad b. 'Abdūs (d. 331/947), Kitāb al-Wuzarā' wa al-Kuttāb, Cairo, 1357/1938.
- Kamil. Ibn al-Athīr, 'Izz al-Dīn, 'Alī b. Muḥammad (d. 630/1233), al-Kāmil fī al-Ta'rīkh, 9 Vols., Leyden, 1851-76.
- Khitat. Al-Maqrizī, Aḥmad b. 'Alī (d. 845/1442), al-Khitat al-Maqriziyya, 2 Vols., Cairo, 1270/1853.
- Kindi. Al-Kindī, Muḥammad b. Yūsuf (d. 350/961), Kitāb al-Wulāt wa Kitāb al-Qudāt, Leyden, 1912.
- Kutubi. Al-Kutūbī, Muḥammad b. Shākir (d. 764/1363), Fawāt al-Wafayāt, 2 Vols., Cairo, 1283 A.H.
- Manaqib. Al-Jāḥiẓ 'Amr b. Baḥr (d. 255/868), "Manāqib al-Turk" in Rasā'il al-Jāḥiẓ, 2 Vols., Cairo, 1384/1964.
- Maqatil. Al-Isfahānī, Abū al-Faraj, Maqātil al-Tālibiyyīn, Cairo, 1368/1949.
- Miskawayh. Ibn Miskawayh, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad (d. 421/1030), Tajārib al-Umam, Vol. VI in Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa al-Ḥadā'iq, Leyden, 1871.

Muntazam.

Ibn al-Jawzī 'Abd al-Rahmān (d. 597/1200), al-Muntazam, Vols. XI, XII, Ms. M.M. No. 526 Ta'rīkh, Cairo.

Muruj.

Al-Mas'ūdī, 'Alī b. al-Husayn (d. 345/958), Murūj al-Dhahab, 9 Vols., ed. and trans. by C.B. de Meynard, Paris, 1861-77.

Nujum.

Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Abū al-Mahāsin (d. 874/1469), al-Nujūm al-Zāhira, 12 Vols., Cairo, n.d.

Shadharat.

Ibn 'Imād al-Hanbalī, Shadharāt al-Dhahab, 8 Vols., Cairo, 1350 A.H.

Sibt.

Sibt Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256), Mir'āt al-Zamān, Vols. IX, X, Ms. M.M. No. 466 Ta'rīkh, Cairo.

Tab.

Al-Tabarī, Muḥammad b. Jarīr (d. 310/922), Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa al-Kulūk, Leyden, 1879-1901.

Tanbih.

Al-Mas'ūdī, Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa al-Ishrāf, Baghdad, 1357/1938.

TBN

Ta'rīkh Ba'd al-Nabī Ilā Tamām al-Khulafā'al-'Abbāsiyyīn, (anonymous), Ms. M.M., No. 104 Ta'rīkh, Cairo.

TDA

Ta'rīkh-i Dawlat-i 'Abbāsiyyat, (anonymous), Ms. Bāyazīd Library, No. 2360, Istanbul.

Wafayat.

Ibn Khallikān, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad (d. 681/1282), Wafayāt al-A'yān, 2 Vols., Cairo, 1299/1882.

- Yaqubi. Al-Ya'qūbī, Aḥmad b. Abī Ya'qūb (d. 284/897), Ta'rīkh. 3 Vols., Beirut, 1375/1955.
- Yaqubi Buldan. Al-Ya'qūbī, Kitāb al-Buldān, Leyden, 1861.
- Yaqut. Yāqūt, Shihāb al-Dīn (d. 626/1229), Irshād al-Arīb ilā Ma'rifat al-Adīb, 7 Vols., ed. by D.S. Margoliouth, Leyden, 1907-27.
- Yaqut, Buldan. Yāqūt, Mu'jam al-Buldān, 4 Vols., ed. by F. Wustenfeld, Leipzig, 1866-70.
- b) Modern Works and Places.
- B.M. British Museum.
- CHI The Cambridge History of Islam, 2 Vols., ed. by P.M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton and B. Lewis, Cambridge University Press, 1970.
- CHIR. The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. V, ed. by J.A. Boyle, Cambridge University Press, 1968.
- CMH The Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. IV, part I., ed. by J.M. Hussey, D.M. Nicol and Gowan, Cambridge University Press, 1966.
- EI¹ Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1st edition, Leyden, 1913-42.
- EI² Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edition, Luzac and Co., London, 1960, in progress.

<u>GAL</u>	<u>Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur</u> , 2 Vols., by Carl Brockelmann, Leyden, 2nd edition, 1943-49, and <u>Supplement</u> in 3 Vols., Leyden, 1937-42.
<u>HME</u>	<u>Historians of the Middle East</u> , ed. by B. Lewis and P.M. Holt, London, 1962.
M.M.	Ma'had al-Makhtūṭāt, Arab League, Cairo.
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies.
c) Periodicals.	
<u>BEA</u>	<u>Bulletin des etudes arabes.</u>
<u>BEO</u>	<u>Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales</u> , Damas/Cairo.
<u>BCA</u>	<u>Bulletin of the College of Art</u> , Baghdad.
<u>BSOAS</u>	<u>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies.</u>
<u>DI</u>	<u>Der Islam.</u>
<u>EHR</u>	<u>The Economic History Review.</u>
<u>IC</u>	<u>Islamic Culture.</u>
<u>IQ</u>	<u>Islamic Quarterly.</u>
<u>JAOS</u>	<u>Journal of the American Oriental Society.</u>
<u>JAS</u>	<u>Journal of the Asiatic Society.</u>
<u>JCAS</u>	<u>Journal of the Central Asian Society.</u>

<u>JESHO</u>	<u>Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient.</u>
<u>JNES</u>	<u>Journal of Near Eastern Studies.</u>
<u>JRAS</u>	<u>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.</u>
<u>JSS</u>	<u>Journal of Semitic Studies.</u>
<u>MMIA</u>	<u>Majalat al-Majma' al-'Ilmi al-'Arabi, Damascus.</u>
<u>MW</u>	<u>Muslim World.</u>
<u>REI</u>	<u>Revue des etudes Islamiques.</u>
<u>RSO</u>	<u>Rivista delgi Studi Orientali.</u>
<u>SI</u>	<u>Studia Islamica.</u>
<u>ZDMG</u>	<u>Zeitschrift der deutschen Morgenlandischen Gesellschaft.</u>

THE CALIPHS OF THE PERIOD

Al-Muntaṣir, Muḥammad b. al-Mutawakkil 247-248/861-862.

Al-Musta'in, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Mu'taṣim 248-252/862-866.

Al-Mu'tazz, 'Abd Allāh b. al-Mutawakkil 252-255/866-869.

Al-Muhtadī, Muḥammad b. al-Wāthiq 255-256/869-870.

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INTRODUCTION

The rise to power of the 'Abbāsid family, the rulers of the Muslim community from 132/750 to 656/1258, in addition to superseding the Umayyad dynasty, constituted at its inception a great revolution in Islam, by claiming to inaugurate a new era of justice, piety and happiness. The 'Abbāsids proclaimed that their right to the Caliphate was based on genealogical grounds arising from their close relationship with the Prophet; The Banū Hāshim were the common ancestors of 'Abbās (from whom the 'Abbāsids took their name). The 'Abbāsids used religion as a means to an end for their political goals, and for the first time in Islamic history the Caliphs adopted new names with religious connotations, and subsequently became well-known by these names. To quote a few examples: al-Mansūr "the one who was supported (by God)"; al-Mahdī "the one who trusts (in God)"; al-Musta'īn, "the one who seeks the help (of God)" etc. Moreover, the Caliph was 'the shadow of God on earth', 'the Caliph of God', and not of the Prophet. Thus what held the Empire together was no longer the Arab Nation, the Arabs in leading positions, but the dynasty, as the administrator of Islamic unity - ultimately, therefore, Islam itself. By adopting these and other means the 'Abbāsid Caliphs succeeded in gaining the confidence and support of the majority of the community. On several occasions this served to help them maintain their power, despite the weak position of the Caliphate,

especially at the beginning of the second part of their reign, immediately after the murder of al-Mutawakkil 247/861.

Clearly the victory of the 'Abbāsids signified a decline, to a certain extent, in the Arab influence. Regional differences became more marked as time went on; in the transition to national states, the importance of the Arabs as a racial and military unit declined visibly. Thus the 'Abbāsids succeeded in weakening Arab tribal solidarity and winning the support of other racial groups, i.e. Persians, and later on the Turks. These new elements, after having been encouraged to extend their influence in the Empire, shortly became the really powerful forces behind state affairs.

Despite the outward harmony and apparent integrity of the ruling family, there was bitter internal conflict which flourished from the very beginning of their rise to power and became increasingly serious as time progressed. The main reason which lay behind the 'Abbāsids' internal disagreements was the struggle for power between the Caliphs and their potential successors. It is the assumption that this conflict was one of the main reasons for the deterioration of the situation within the Caliphate during the period under consideration.

It is evident that the Caliphs had only the support of the powerful courtiers to rely on, in securing the succession of their own favourite sons. Consequently these dignitaries, who sought only to further their own interests,

realized that they could best maintain their position of power by encouraging disunity within the royal family. Thus, immediately after the death of the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, the power seems to have been transferred from the hands of the Caliphs to their viziers and to the other courtiers who wished to increase their influence at the expense of the 'Abbāsids, leaving the Caliph as merely the titular head of state.

It is with al-Mu'taṣim's ascent to the throne that the newcomers, i.e. Turks, began to emerge on the political scene, having been introduced in great numbers into the service of the dynasty during the reign of al-Mu'taṣim's immediate predecessor. In order to maintain the religious policy of al-Ma'mūn, and to suppress the traditional sources of recruits to the army, i.e. the Arabs and the Persians, al-Mu'taṣim continually increased the number of these foreign mercenaries - at first using them as bodyguards and later allowing them to penetrate to various insignificant posts. The introduction of Turks into the army began a new phase in the history of the 'Abbāsid dynasty, which was notable for its anarchy and disintegration. The Turkish officers elevated themselves to power shortly after their recruitment, and soon became the virtual masters of the Capital during the period under consideration. This was partly due to the sympathetic attitude of the Caliphs towards them, and partly due to temporary co-operation between the soldiery and their leaders, with whom they at first felt linked in a common cause.

It is not easy to make a true and coherent assessment of the position of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate during 247-256/861-870, without a comprehensive presentation of the period beginning with the emergence of these foreign mercenaries. Therefore, any analytical study of this period must concentrate on the development of the situation in the 'Abbāsid Caliphate as it evolved from the reign of al-Mu'taṣim, because the instability of the political life of the Empire during the period following al-Mutawakkil's murder was a direct consequence of the increase in power enjoyed by a few Turkish officers. Thus, despite their powerful role in directing the affairs of the Capital, the Turks had not considered taking over the Caliphate for themselves or even attempted to transfer it to another Arab family. This was mainly due to the divine right which surrounded the 'Abbāsid family to rule the Muslim community on the one hand, and the lack of interest among the Turkish generals to take over the Caliphate for themselves, preferring rather to maintain their powerful position, on the other.

It must be remembered that the Turkish mercenaries were not united, but that they characteristically showed jealousy and envy. However, they did not feel secure because of the strong opposition which they had met both from various military groups and from civilians as well. This, together with the disunity amongst themselves, led to the decline of their interim power.

For the purpose of any analytical study of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate from 247-256/861-870 we must consider the situation

of the Caliphate in terms of the 'Abbāsīd family and its role in the state; the attitudes of the powerful army officers towards both the Caliphs and their viziers who suffered more than the 'Abbāsīds from the supremacy of the Turkish officers; and the position of the Turkish mercenaries, as a separate group from their leaders. In addition to the above, consideration must be given to the position of these Turks in relation to the divisions among themselves; to the various other elements in the army and to the 'amma. Finally in order to assess the true political situation in the Empire which affected the position of the Caliphs in the Capital, a special essay has been devoted to the revolts in the provinces. These revolts initiated the period of disintegration within the Caliphate and as a result several of its provinces succeeded in obtaining their autonomy. In consequence the Caliphate from then on concentrated mainly on the region of Iraq, but still continued to exercise a spiritual influence over the more remote provinces.

In spite of the obvious importance of this complex situation in the history of the 'Abbāsīd political institution, as well as to its social and cultural development, a surprisingly small amount of scholarly attention has been devoted to it. It should be pointed out that neither this period nor any of the four Caliphs involved, nor the position of the Turkish mercenaries, has been the subject of a detailed study; whenever this period is mentioned, it is only presented in brief, in a sentence or two within a more general context, and is generally described as a period of anarchy, chaos and disintegration. Therefore, this study

has been undertaken with the intention of filling the gaps and of presenting a coherent presentation and interpretation of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate during the period under consideration.

This dissertation attempts to view the position of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate during this specific period in its proper historical perspective and to outline the ramifications of its influence, particularly on the politico-social life of the Empire. In so doing it is hoped that subsequent studies may ultimately reveal the influence which this period brought to bear on the further political evolutions of the 'Abbāsid dynasty. Clearly, it would be presumptuous to claim that the conflict among the 'Abbāsid family and the emergence of the Turkish mercenaries with their consequent rise to power were the sole elements governing the future development of the politico-social and economic life of the Empire. That development, we hasten to point out, involved many complex factors. But, nevertheless, the development of the political life of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate which initiated many changes, may, among other origins, have roots in the period under consideration.

CHAPTER I

SURVEY OF THE SOURCES

The second 'Abbāsid period can be considered one of the richest decades in the wealth of literature which has survived in various fields. The sources may be classified in the following way: a) general historians; b) local historians; c) biographers; d) literature; e) geographers.

A) General Historians

Although the common interest of these historians was to survey the whole period within their general field, they are the main source of information for this study. It is simpler to classify the general historians chronologically; and according to their importance to our field or research, to arrange them in the following categories.

1. Contemporary

a) Al-Ṭabarī.¹

Muḥammad b. Jarīr Abū Ja'far, an Arab historian and traditionalist, was born in 225/839 at Amul² in the province

1. Fihrist, pp. 326, 351; Baghdad, II, 163-69; Sam'ānī, Kitab al-Ansāb, London, 1912, fol. 367a; Wafayat, I, 572-78; Yaqut, VI, 423-62; Ḥajji Khalīfa, Kashf al-Zunūn, ed. by G. Fluegel, Leipzig, 1837, II, 1429; GAL, I, 142, 184, 189; SI, 217; F. Rosenthal, A History of Muslim Historiography, Leyden, 1968, pp. 134-35, also the index; D.S. Margoliouth, Lectures on Arabic Historians, Calcutta, 1930, pp. 103-12; HME, index; al-Ṭabarī, Ta'rikh, ed. by Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo, 1963, introduction; EI¹, s.v. al-Ṭabarī.

2. Amul was the capital of the region of Ṭabaristān during the 'Abbāsids, though its Ṭāhirid governors generally resided at Sāriya. Yaqut, Buldan, I, 354; Le Strange, The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate, Cambridge, 1905, p. 37.

of Ṭabaristān and died in 310/922. He began to devote himself to study at a very early age and is said to have known the Qur'ān by heart by the time he was seven. After his early education in his native town his father, who was quite wealthy, provided him with funds to visit Rayy¹ and the surrounding area. From there he went to Baghdad where Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), under whom he had intended to study, died shortly before his arrival. After a brief stay in Baṣra and Kūfa he again returned to Baghdad where he remained for some time before setting out for Egypt. Although our sources do not mention his visit to Samarra, there is a brief indication in his historical work which clearly indicates that he had been in that city.²

Al-Ṭabarī wrote several books, the most important of which is his "History of the Prophets and Kings", Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk.³ The book begins with the Creation and continues to the year 302 A.H. From the beginning of Muḥammad's era the material is arranged in chronological order according to the Hijra Calendar, usually stating briefly the virtues of each Caliph after describing his reign. He procured his material mostly from oral tradition, which he had ample opportunity to gather on his extensive

-
1. Rayy was located in the north-eastern of the Jibāl province. In the 4th (10th) century Rayy appears to have been the chief of the four capital cities of this province. Yaqut, Buldan, II, 892-901; Le Strange, pp. 214-17.
 2. Tab., III, 1512.
 3. Ed. by De Goeje, 3 vols., Leyden 1879-90; Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo, 1960.

travels. His travels were mainly prompted by the desire for knowledge (ṭalab al-ʿilm), and by the desire to study under distinguished scholars. He also used literary sources, namely a book by Abū Mikhnaf, Kitab Akhbār Ahl al-Baṣra, and the Sīra of Muḥammad b. Ishāq. Al-Ṭabarī did not arrange his material into a connected account of historical events but rather contented himself with collecting the available information and recording the different and often contradictory accounts as they were given to him.¹ He therefore avoided any responsibility for the reliability of the traditions collected by him but this does not necessarily affect the value of his work. On the contrary, it gives it a special status and makes it more significant mainly due to his reliability in preserving his material exactly as it reached him. As far as our period is concerned, al-Ṭabarī's material is based mainly on his own observation. Thus, he could be regarded as the main source of information in this study, in which his writings are often compared with those of either contemporary or later general historians.

Al-Ṭabarī's narrative of events fails to provide a clear and coherent picture of the political situation of the Empire during the early ʿAbbāsid reigns. His main concern is with the centre of the Caliphate and even in this he does not always succeed in mentioning certain accounts which have been accessible through other contemporary or near-contemporary historians, such as al-Yaʿqūbī or al-Masʿūdī.

1. Tab., III, 1812-33.

Al-Ṭabarī lays more emphasis on the eastern part of the Empire than on the western parts such as Syria, Egypt and North Africa. He sometimes mentions briefly the affairs of al-Jazīra.¹ On the other hand, al-Ṭabarī can be regarded as the 'court reporter' because he provides us with the daily events which took place in the capital, but no note is made of the widening historical and cultural horizon of this period which he must have observed.²

Although al-Ṭabarī always presents more than one version of a particular event, he provides the account with a list of authorities which render it both comprehensive and trustworthy. For this period he rarely states the main source of information, usually starting his account with 'It is said' or 'It is mentioned' or the like. In spite of all its shortcomings the historical account of al-Ṭabarī's history remains the most comprehensive, significant and coherent source for early Islamic history.

b) Al-Ya'qūbī.³

Aḥmad b. Abī Ya'qūb b. Ja'far b. Waḥb b. Wāḍiḥ (d. 284/895) was an Arab historian and geographer. He was a moderate and pro-'Alid but his feelings did not influence his historical writing.⁴ He belonged to a family of clerks

1. Al-Jazīra is the name used by Arab geographers to denote the northern part of the territory situated between the Tigris and Euphrates. Le Strange, pp. 86-114; EI², s.v. Djazīra.

2. F. Rosenthal, p. 134.

3. Yaqut, II, 156; GAL, I, 226; SI, 405; F. Rosenthal, pp. 133-34; D.S. Margoliouth, pp. 125-27; HME, index; EI¹, s.v. al-Ya'qūbī; ZMDG, XL, 1886, pp. 189-203; ZMDG, XLI, 1887, 415-44.

4. EI¹, s.v. al-Ya'qūbī.

and travelled quite often to various places, which enabled him to obtain diverse material about the places he visited. His Ta'rikh¹ beginning with the creation and extending to 259/872, is one of the earliest sources of Islamic history.

The arrangement of the material according to reigns - unlike al-Tabarī's year by year account - resembles that which is adopted in modern works of an analogous nature. In his historical work astrological details are given for the commencement of each reign whence experts would be able to see how the course of events followed the conditions of the planets at its inauguration. At the end of each reign he recorded various lists of facts. First he included the names of the people who most influenced the sovereign, followed by those who led the pilgrimage each year, then he proceeded to list the names of those who were responsible for the raids and those who had distinguished themselves as jurists.

Al-Ya'qūbī's account of the 'Abbāsid period are clear and coherent although they tend to be rather short. He does not often mention his sources but it is obvious that he did not limit himself to the same sources of information as did al-Tabarī. Al-Ya'qūbī brings to light many interesting points which contribute to a better understanding of men and politics in that period. He does not present the affairs of the central government, al-Jazira and the eastern provinces of the Empire, for his main concerns seem to have

1. First publishing was by M.T. Houtsma, 2 vols., Leyden 1889; then Cairo 3 vols., and later in Iraq, 3 vols., 1375/1955.

been Syria, Egypt and Hijāz. This may have been due to the conditions and the time, and to his attempt to avoid any oppression which might have befallen him had he presented the affairs of the capital truthfully.

Unlike al-Ṭabarī, he does not present the existing divergent opinions but gives the accounts from his frequently partial point of view. Al-Ya'qūbī's historical accounts would have been of more advantage if he had paid more attention to the affairs of the central government. But, even with these minor weaknesses his history is still considered the main source of this study together with that of al-Ṭabarī.

Reference has also been made to al-Ya'qūbī's other works such as Mushakalat al-Nās li Zamānihim¹ and Kitāb al-Buldān.² In the latter al-Ya'qūbī describes how he collected material for his geographical work. He wrote down what his informants told him and took notes on the history of the Muslim conquests as well as on the administration, economic history, and the contemporary situation of each region.³ In this al-Ya'qūbī gives a very clear view of the political, social and economic situation of Samarra at the time.

When dealing with contemporary general historians in the field of research, one must not forget the works of such

1. Ed. by W. Millwar, Teheran A.H. 1323; then Beirut 1962.

2. Ed. by A.W. Junboll, Leyden, 1961; De Goeje, Leyden, 1961.

3. Yaqubi, Buldān, p. 2; F. Rosenthal, p. 106.

others as Ibn Qutayba, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh b. Muslim (d. 276/889),¹ al-Dinawarī, Abū Ḥanīfa Aḥmad b. Dāwūd (d. 282/897),² and Ibn al-A‘tham al-Kūfī (d. 3rd/9th century).³

Although they are very concise in the material they offer concerning the early ‘Abbāsid period, their accounts shed light on the real politico-cultural situation of the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate. It must also be remembered that most of the works of such historians do not extend to the period of our study.

2. Near Contemporary.

The fourth century A.H. which came to be considered as the peak of the ‘Abbāsid cultural activities provides us with several distinguished historians such as al-Mas‘ūdī.⁴ Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 345/956) was an Arab historian and geographer and one of the most versatile authors of the fourth century A.H.⁵ While still young he travelled extensively, visiting most of the Muslim provinces and a few countries beyond the borders of Islam. His travels were certainly stimulated not by a thirst for adventure but by a strong desire for knowledge. Al-Mas‘ūdī

1. Kitāb al-Imāma wa al-Siyāsa, Cairo, 1322, 1327, 1387 A.H., is ascribed to Ibn Qutayba, according to de Goeje, Riv. Stud. Or., I, 415-421; it was probably written in his life-time by a Magribī or an Egyptian. GAL, I, 187; EI¹, s.v. Ibn Kutaiba.

2. Al-Akḥbār al-Tiwāl, ed., by V. Guirgass, Leyden, 1888; then by ‘Abd al-Mun‘im ‘Āmir, Cairo, 1960.

3. Kitāb al-Futūḥ, Aḥmad III library, Ms. No. 2956, Istanbul.

4. Fihrist, pp. 219-20; Yaqut, V, 147-49; GAL, I, 141-43; Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs, Cambridge, 1953, pp. 352-54; F. Rosenthal, pp. 108, 109, 135-36; HME, (index); EI¹, s.v. al-Mas‘ūdī.

5. EI¹, s.v. al-Mas‘ūdī.

wrote several books, the most important of which is Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-Jawhar.¹ Before going into the historical accounts in this work, al-Mas'ūdī describes the form of the earth, the cities and the noteworthy geographical phenomena, then the treatment of pre-Islamic Arabs, stressing the cultural elements in their history, combined with a discussion of all foreigners known to the Muslims of the fourth century A.H. In his Murūj al-Mas'ūdī always refers to other books of his, such as Akhbār al-Zamān,² and al-Kitāb al-Awsat, in which he corrupts his accounts and never goes into detail, especially for the period in question. Concerning the early period of Islam he lays more emphasis on opinions dealing with 'Alī than with those of the prophet.³ His pro-'Alid sympathies can be seen in his use of the term 'martyred' (ustushhida) to describe the murder of this Caliph while in other instances, as on the murder of the Caliph 'Umar he uses the term 'murdered' (qutila).⁴ Moreover al-Mas'ūdī so often gives more emphasis to the 'Alid affairs than those of the state. For example, he devotes almost the whole chapter on the reign of al-Musta'īn to the revolts in Kūfa and other regions which were of 'Alid leanings.⁵ He never refers to original sources but contents himself

1. Ed., with French trans. by C. Barbier De Maynard, 9 vols., Paris, 1861-77. Then in 4 vols., Cairo, 1948.

2. Printed in Cairo 1939 and then Beirut, 1386/1966.

3. Muruj, IV.

4. Muruj, IV, 191, 288.

5. Muruj, VII, 330-363.

with superficial enquiries and accepts both tales and legends which attract his attention without any criticism. This sometimes impairs the trustworthiness of his account, which is all the more dangerous as his elegant style may induce the reader to accept his accounts and details.

Al-Mas'ūdī's method of arranging his material, from the death of the prophet, is according to the accession of each Caliph, and then he proceeds in his presentation of the events which coincide with the reign of that Caliph or which draw his attention. Then at the end of each Caliph's reign he mentions the names of the important persons who died during that particular period. He sometimes enriches his accounts by presenting several selected poems linked with the events. His Murūj cannot be described as a coherent analytic history because he was incapable of finishing a subject he had begun, continually diverging from his main theme, by simply referring to either Akhbār al-Zamān or al-Kitab al-Awṣaṭ or both at the same time. Nevertheless, we still owe to him a good deal of valuable information concerning the Muslim Empire and the Murūj contributes a great deal of knowledge of the subject under discussion.

Although al-Mas'ūdī's Murūj does not reach the standard of either al-Ṭabarī's Ta'rīkh or al-Ya'qūbī's Ta'rīkh, it is still regarded as one of the most important Muslim universal histories, and the three of them were by no means the only accounts that grew in the fertile beginnings of early Islam.¹

1. F. Rosenthal, p. 136.

Al-Mas'ūdī's other work is Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa al-Ishrāf¹ in which he states that the object of this work is not to give a detailed account but to make a simple and brief presentation of the significant secular or religious events until his time.² Despite its scanty contents the book brings to the attention many interesting points mentioned in neither al-Ṭabarī's or al-Ya'qūbī's work or even in his Murūj.

Other near-contemporary historians are: al-Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī³ (d. 355/966), Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. 360/970),⁴ and Ibn Miskawayh⁵ (d. 421/1030). All of them except Ibn Miskawayh provide us with very scanty material but nevertheless remain of great interest and bring to our notice numerous fresh accounts untold by early historians. Their works along with those of the early historians, enable us to form a coherent picture of the politico-social and economic situation of the 'Abbāsid Empire. Ibn Miskawayh differs from the other near-contemporary historians in that, unlike them, he provides a more detailed account of events, probably taken from that of al-Ṭabarī or uses the same sources as the latter. Miskawayh in volume 6 of his work Tajārib al-Umam arranges his material according to the

1. Ed. by De Goeje, Leyden, 1894; reprinted in Baghdad, n.d.

2. Tanbih, pp. 4-5.

3. Al-Bad' wa al-Ta'rīkh, ed. by K. Hawar, 6 vols., Paris, 1899-1919.

4. Ta'rīkh sinī Mulūk al-Arḍ wa al-A'nbiyā', printed in Leipzig, 1844; Beirut, n.d.

5. Tajārib al-Umam, vol. VI in Kitāb al-'Uyūn wa al-Ḥadā'iq fī Akhbār al-Ḥaqā'iq, Leyden, 1871.

accession of each Caliph. His work in general is very important because of the similarity to al-Ṭabarī's accounts, although coming from a non-Muslim background.

3. Later Historians

At the close of the fifth century A.H. there is the manuscript No. 2360 of Ta'rīkh-i Dawlat-i 'Abbāsiyyat, Bāyazīd library, Istanbul.¹ The work, by an anonymous author, comprises 120 folios. It begins at the time of the Prophet and proceeds with the Caliphs, according to the accession of each until the reign of the Caliph al-Mustanjid (559/1163). The main reason which forced the author to end his work with this period, as he himself states, was due to his unexpected departure from Iraq which prevented him from obtaining fresh and reliable material.²

The author seems to have felt sympathetic towards the 'Abbāsid family and to have considered them the rightful rulers of the Muslim Empire, calling their dynasty "the victorious state", al-dawla al-qāhira. His sources were probably written material which afforded him the opportunity to select whatever attracted his attention. Most of his accounts are similar to those of al-Ṭabarī and other early historians but he put forward accounts of many interesting

1. There is another copy of this manuscript entitled, al-Anbā' fī Ta'rīkh al-Khulafā', Ms. al-Fatih library No. 9189, Istanbul. Dr. Q. al-Samarrā'ī, of the University of Leyden, who has been involved in editing this manuscript, believes that the author is al-Imrānī (d. 570-80/1174-1184). This information was obtained through personal correspondence.

2. Fol. 120a.

events which we do not find in the work of other general historians, such as the conflict between Bāykabāk, the powerful Turkish officer and the Caliph al-Muhtadī which was due to the former's tyrannical actions towards the non-Turkish subjects.¹ The manuscript's major defect is the author's pro-'Abbāsīd attitude which prevented him from mentioning any sort of conflict among the members of this family. He praised, for example, the Caliph al-Mu'tazz for his gracious attitude towards his brother al-Muwaffaq, ignoring the enmity between this Caliph and his two brothers al-Muwaffaq and al-Mu'ayyad.² But this weakness does not affect the value of his manuscript too badly and so it is often worthwhile comparing his accounts with those of the early sources.³

Later historians such as Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1120), Ibn al-Athīr (630/1232), Abū al-Fidā' (d. 733/1331), al-Dhahabī (d. 746/1346), Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1371), Ibn Khaldūn (d. 804/1406), al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418), al-Maqrīzī

1. Fol. 63a.

2. Cf. fol. 60a.

3. This study does not ignore the importance of the under-mentioned manuscripts, which in one way or another contributed a great deal of new information: Al-Qudā'ī, Muḥammad b. Salāma b. Ga'far (d. 454/1062), 'Uyūm al-Ma'ārif fī Funūn Akhbār al-Khulafā', Ms. Aḥmad III, library No. 2898, Istanbul; Ibn al-Abbār, Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh (d. 658/1260), I'tāb al-Kuttāb, Ms. B.M. Or. 6641, Ta'rīkh Ba'd al-Nabī Ila Tamām al-Khulafā' al-'Abbāsiyyīn, (Anonymous) Ms. M.M. No. 104 Ta'rīkh, Cairo; Ibn Nubāta, shams al-Dīn (d. 750/1349) Kitāb al-Iktifā' min Ta'rīkh al-Khulafā', Ms. M.M. No. 57 Ta'rīkh, Cairo, and Ṣibt Ibn al-Jawzī, Mir'āt al-Zamān (vols. IX, X) Ms. M.M. No. 466, Ta'rīkh, Cairo.

(d. 845/1442) and al Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) depend heavily on early sources for their information and their accounts of the early 'Abbāsid period are more often a summary. Despite this defect they are still of some value to the student of early 'Abbāsid history, and their material to a greater or lesser extent can be compared with that of the early historians.

Ibn al-Athīr and later Ibn Khaldūn for example, give very detailed accounts of the affairs of the western provinces of the Empire and they felt obliged in their works to fill the gap which al-Ṭabarī for instance had left. Moreover they provide us with very clear accounts of the Khawārij revolts in al-Jazīra which our early historians seem to have missed. Their main source of information was probably written material such as the work of Abū Zakariya al-Azdī¹ (d. 334/945) Ta'rīkh al-Mawṣil.²

B) Local Historians.

General chronicles such as those of al-Ṭabarī and al-Mas'ūdī concentrate on the imperial province of Iraq and its surrounding districts; mention is made of the distant provinces only in connection with significant incidents or rebellions. Even then, the information they provide can only be considered vague and scanty. It is here that information derived from local histories such as Ta'rīkh

1. GAL, SI, 210; F. Rosenthal, index; M. Canard, Histoire de la Dynastie des Hamdanides, Algiers, 1951, I, 17; Al-Azdī, Ta'rīkh, al-Mawṣil, vol. II, introduction; EI² s.v. al-Azdī.

2. Ed. by A. Ḥabībāh, Cairo, 1387/1969.

Tabaristān¹ and Tā'rīkh-i Sīstān² becomes more vital. But one must be very wary in accepting their accounts because of their sympathetic feeling towards their own region. It should be admitted that, with few exceptions, the information supplied by local historians is rarely of the kind to satisfy the quest of the general historian. Although some of the local historians are prejudiced against the central regime, a very clear idea of the situation can be obtained by comparing their accounts with those of the general historians.

A great deal of information in the early part of this study has been gleaned from Ta'rīkh al-Mawṣil by al-Azdī. Much fresh and useful material can be obtained from this work concerning the other provinces of the Empire, especially the central part, despite the fact that the author's main object was to write the history of al-Mawṣil and Jazīra.

Other local historians who cover the western provinces for instance include the following writers. Al-Kindī³ (d. 350/961) Kitāb al-Wulāt wa Kitāb al-Qudāt⁴ covers the 'Abbāsid period till almost the middle of the fourth century A.H. Al-Maqrīzī⁵ (d. 845/1441-2) Khiṭaṭ⁶ contains various

1. Ed. by A. Iqbal, Tehran, 1941; an abridged translation by E.G. Brown, Leyden, 1905.
2. Ed. by Malik al-Shu'arā' Bihār, Tehran, 1314 A.H.
3. GAL, I, 149; SI, 229-30; F. Rosenthal, pp. 162-63; EI¹, s.v. al-Kindī.
4. Ed. by R. Guest, "E.J.W. Gibb Memorial series" vol. XIX, Leyden, 1912.
5. Suyūṭī, Husn al-Muḥāḍara, Cairo, 1882, I, 321; GAL, I, 498; II, 38; SI, 305; A. al-'Azzāwī, Historians of Iraq, I, Baghdad, 1376/1957, 231-32; F. Rosenthal, pp. 155f, 171, 175; EI¹, s.v. al-Maqrīzī.
6. 2 vols. Bulaq, 1270 A.H.

kinds of information on governors, local revolts, the attitude of the Dhimmis towards the Muslims and a chapter on religious sects. It is a very comprehensive analytical work on Egypt. Ibn Taghrī Bardī¹ (d. 874/1469) al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa al-Qāhira² is mainly concerned with Egypt from the time of the Arab conquest. However, like some other local historians, he gives some brief information concerning other provinces. Ibn al-ʿAdīm³ (d. 660/1261) in his Zubdat al-Ḥalab fī Taʾrīkh Ḥalab⁴ does not confine himself to the history of Aleppo, but extends his work to include the whole region of Bilād al-Shām which, despite his scanty material, renders his book of special importance in dealing with the area.

As far as the eastern provinces are concerned, the works of Ibn Isfandiyār and the anonymous Taʾrīkh-i Sīstān are of some value in the study of the early ʿAbbāsīd period especially when dealing with the affairs of the eastern provinces, and their relations with the capital.

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1. Al-Sakhāwī, al-Iʿlām bi al-Tawbīkh, Baghdad, 1963, pp. 305-308; Shadharat, IX, 317; Ibn Iyas, Badāʾiʾ al-Zuhūr, III, 43; Ḥajji Khalīfa, I, 356; GAL, II, 41; 511, 39; A. al-ʿAzzāwī, I, 245-48; EI² s.v. Abū l-Maḥāsīn.
 2. Leyden, 1851 and then Cairo 1929-39.
 3. Al-Sakhāwī, p. 125; Yaqut, VI, 18-46; Ḥajji Khalīfa, I, 200; GAL, I, 332; SI, 568-9; S. Dahan, "The origin and development of local histories of Syria", HME, pp. 108-17; A. al-ʿAzzāwī, pp. 77-83; F. Rosenthal, pp. 156ff; EI² s.v. Ibn al-ʿAdīm.
 4. Ed. by S. Dahan, 2 vols., Damascus, 1951, 1954.

C) Biographers.

The biographical works are important to this study because they not only contain information of a personal nature about many of the personalities of the 'Abbāsīd era, but because they also provide interesting accounts of their political and social careers. Typical examples of these are the works of al-Khalīfa b. Khayyāt (d. 240/864); al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071); Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282); Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571/1176) and Ibn Shākir al-Kutubī (d. 764/1363).

The work of al-Baghdādī¹ Ta'rīkh Baghdad² is also of special value because the author's main subjects were the personalities of Baghdad. Therefore after dealing with the topography of Baghdad, he proceeds to give biographical data on all important personalities who visited, lived in, or even passed through, the city. The biographies of al-Baghdādī are arranged in alphabetical order in which he often quotes his source of information.

The work of Ibn Khallikān,³ Wafayāt al-A'yān⁴ is

1. Wafayat, I, 23-32; Muntazam, VIII, 265-70; Ibn Kathir, XII, 101-103; Yaqut, I, 246-60; GAL, I, 329; SI, 562; F. Rosenthal, index; HME, index; EI² s.v. Al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī.
2. Published in Cairo, 14 vols., 1349/1931.
3. Ibn Hajar, al-Durar al-Kāmina, III, Heyderabad, 1373/1954, 233; Ibn Kathir, XIII, 301; Shadharat, V, 370ff; GAL, I, 326-28; SI, 561; de Slane's introduction to his translation of Ibn Khallikan's work; F. Rosenthal, pp. 82-84; A. al-'Azzāwī, pp. 95-102; HME, index; EI², s.v. Ibn Khallikān.
4. Translated into English by M.G. de Slane, 4 vols. London, 1843-1871; published in Cairo, 2 vols., 1299/1882; then Bulaq 1888; Beirut 4 vols., then ed. by I. Abbās, 6 vols., Beirut 1970.

arranged alphabetically because in the words of the author himself, "It is easier than arranging it chronologically."¹ He deals with all kinds of people but excludes the companions of the Prophet and the Caliphs because, also in his own words, "There is too much information about them."² Ibn Khallikān's method is to state several sources for each biography included in his work. This suggests that his material is selected from well-known works.

Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī³ (d. 356/967) Maqātil al-Tālibiyyin⁴ occupies a special place in this category, simply because it deals with the Tālibite 'martyrs' who were killed in one way or another from the early period of Islamic history until the reign of the Caliph al-Muqtadir (246-311/908-932). Though the author was pro-'Alid (Zaydite) he does not seem to have been biased in his historical information as he names his various authorities and gives more than one version of any given event. Although he recognizes the leader of the revolt in Hījāz during the reign of al-Mu'tazz as an 'Alid, he avoids presenting his revolt in detail simply because of the rebel's tyrannical actions.⁵

1. Wafayat, I, 2.

2. Wafayat, I, 3.

3. Wafayat, I, 421-22; Yaqut, V, 149-68; Baghdad, XI, 398-400; GAL, I, 146; SI, 225-6.

4. Published in Tehran 1307 A.H. and in Najaf, 1353 A.H.

5. Maqatil, p. 669.

D) Literature.

Literature is an important category of material in the study of early 'Abbāsid history, and the following writers are significant. The work of al-Jāḥiẓ¹ (d. 255/868-69) Rasā'il,² illustrates the true circumstances in which the army was placed during the period under consideration. Though it gives a coherent and concise description of the structure of the army, it must not be taken as indisputable fact mainly because of the period in which it was written.

'Abd Allāh b. al-Mu'tazz³ (d. 296/908) the author of Rasā'il Ibn al-Mu'tazz⁴ who was contemporary to the period and a descendant of the royal family, gives a very analytical and comprehensive picture of the political situation of the Caliphate. He clearly illustrates the influence of the Turkish officers at the court and the harsh circumstances which had been forced on the Caliphs by these officers after the murder of al-Mutawakkil.⁵

Other literary works differ in their contribution to this study and typical of these are the works of Ibn 'Abd

1. Baghdad, XII, 212-22; Yaqut, VI, 56-80; Ibn Kathir, XI, 19-20; M.K. Ali, Umarā' al-Bayān, Cairo, 1355/1937; GAL, I, 152, 342; SI, 239, 403; EI² s.v. Al-Djāḥiẓ.

2. Ed. by A.S.M. Hārūn, 2 vols., Cairo, 1384/1964.

3. Fihrist, pp. 168-69; Muntazam, VI, 84-88; Ibn Kathir, XI, 108-110; GAL, I, 79-80; SI, 128-30; A.K. Zakī, Ibn al-Mu'tazz al-'Abbāsī, Cairo, 1965; EI², s.v. Ibn al-Mu'tazz.

4. Ed. by M. A.M. al-Khafājī, Cairo, 1365/1946.

5. Ibn al-Mu'tazz, Rasā'il, pp. 82-83.

Rabbih¹ (d. 328/940), al-'Iqd al-Farīd;² al-Ṣūlī³ (d. 335/946) Akḥbār al-Buḥturī⁴ and Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī's Kitāb al-Aghānī.⁵ Although all these works deal mainly with prose and poetry, they provide us with numerous accounts of certain historical events. The most significant of these is the struggle for succession amongst the members of the 'Abbāsīd family. In addition to this, they give very detailed accounts of the social and political life of the 'Abbāsīd court.

E) Geographers.

The important geographers include Ibn Khurdādhbih⁶ (d. 300/912), al-Iṣṭakhrī⁷ (d. 346/977), Ibn al-Faqīh⁸ (d. 365/975), Ibn Ḥawqal⁹ (d. 367/977) al-Muqaddasī¹⁰ (d. 375/985)

1. Tha'ālibī, Yatīmat al-dahr, I, 300-304; Ibn-Khāqān, Maṭmaḥ al-Anfus, Istanbul, 1302/1884, pp. 51-53; Wafayat, I, 32-33; Yaqut, II, 67-72; Suyūṭī, Bughyat, p. 161; GAL, I, 154, SI, 250-251; EI², s.v. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih.
2. Published in Cairo, V, vols. 1944-1946.
3. Fihrist, pp. 215-16; al-Sam'ānī, fol. 357; Wafayat, I, 51-55; Ḥajjī Khalīfa, index; GAL, I, 143, 145.
4. Ed. by al-Ashtar, Damascus, 1378/1958.
5. Published in 20 vols., Bulaq 1285/1868; Leyden, 21 vols., 1888. Tables by I. Guidi. Leyden, 1895-1901; Cairo, 20 vols., 1334/1916; and Cairo, 1927.
6. Kitāb al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik, ed. by de Goeje, Leyden, 1889.
7. Kitāb al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik, ed. by de Goeje, Leyden, 1870; Kitāb al-Aqālīm, Baghdad, n.d.
8. Kitāb al-Buldān, ed. by de Goeje, Leyden, 1885.
9. Kitāb al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik, ed. by de Goeje, Leyden, 1873; Ṣurāt al-Ard, ed. by J.H. Kramers, Leyden, 1938.
10. Aḥsan al-Taqāsīm fī Ma'rifat al-Aqālīm, ed. by de Goeje, Leyden, 1906.

and Yāqūt¹ (d. 626/1228). Although they deal mainly with the geographical description of the various provinces and cities, they provide us with some historical information which sheds light on the position of the Islamic Empire especially after the recruitment of the Turkish slaves to the army. Indeed, their work may in certain cases help us to understand the sort of relationship which existed between the capital and the different provinces of the Empire. In addition to the above named geographers mention has already been made to al-Ya'qūbī's Kitāb al-Buldān in which certain historical facts can be verified, in particular those concerned with the central government.

1. Mu'jam al-Buldān, ed. by F. Wustenfeld, 6 vols., Leipzig, 1866-70.

CHAPTER II

SURVEY OF THE CONFLICT AMONG THE 'ABBĀSID FAMILY

Preliminary to any description of the situation of the 'Abbāsid family in the period under consideration, some attention should be paid to the rivalries and alliances which characterized its internal structure since the very date of the establishment of the dynasty. This instability within the family itself contributed in a large measure to the insecurity of the Caliphs occupying the throne at any given time since the reign of al-Hādī (169-170/785-786); in fact, evidence of it can be seen in the very first years of the dynasty when al-Saffāh (132-136/749-754) ignored the right of his uncle 'Abd Allāh to succeed to the Caliphate and nominated instead al-Manṣūr (136-158/754-775) and 'Īsā b. Mūsā respectively as his successors.¹ When 'Abd Allāh sought to assert his claim a civil war broke out in which he was supported by various military contingents from Khurāsān, Syria and Jazīra. Therefore, al-Manṣūr was forced to rely on the support of Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī despite the dislike and distrust he felt for him.

Abū Ja'far al-Manṣūr, who ascended the throne in 136/754,² faced a very critical situation throughout the Empire,

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1. Tab., III, 87. It is recorded that 'Abd Allāh felt entitled to the throne on the basis of al-Saffāh's promise that whoever from among the 'Abbāsids pursued and killed Marwān II, (127-132/744-750) the last Umayyad Caliph, would be his successor. Tab., III, 92-93; Azdi, p. 163.
 2. Al-Khalīfa, Ibn Khayyāt, Ta'rīkh, ed. by A. al-'umarī, Baghdad, 1386/1968, II, 437; Tab., III, 88; Azdi, p. 163; Muru'j, VI, 156.

caused by his uncle's revolt and the enmity between the Caliph and his powerful general, Abū Muslim. Moreover, it is said that 'Īsā b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās demonstrated the oath of allegiance to himself instead of 'Abū Ja'fār al-Manṣūr but when Abū Muslim arrived in the capital people left 'Īsā and joined him, recognizing al-Manṣūr as the real Caliph.

When 'Īsā remained alone and Abū Ja'far entered the city, 'Īsā apologised for his misconduct, pretending that he wanted to control the army and maintain the security.¹ In 147/764, after having vanquished his uncle 'Abd Allāh and other rebels in the provinces, the Caliph felt rather more secure on the throne, and he directed his attention to depriving 'Īsā b. Mūsā from his place as second in line of succession. Al-Manṣūr seems for a long time to have had the intention of making his son, al-Mahdī, heir-apparent, depriving his nephew 'Īsā b. Mūsā of the succession. When al-Manṣūr suggested this to 'Īsā, the latter rejected it out of hand, and the Caliph was so displeased that he dismissed 'Īsā from the seat of honour on his right, and treated him with contumely.² Several accounts exist which describe the

1. Ibn Qutayba, al-Imāma wa al-Siyāsa, II, 133-34; Dinawarī, al-Akhbār al-Tiwāl, p. 375; cf. Yaqubi, III, 85; Azdi, p. 161. Abū Muslim tried to persuade 'Īsā to be the Caliph instead, but he refused to do so. Ibn al-A'tham, al-Kūfī, Kitāb al-Futūḥ, II, 235a.

2. Tab., III, 332; Kamil, V, 442.

stratagems which were used by the Caliph to persuade his nephew to step down, and also the treatment which the other members of the family met with during his reign.¹ Al-Mansūr finally succeeded in securing the consent of 'Isā b. Mūsā in recognizing al-Mahdī as the next successor.² Anwar G. Chejne considers the correspondence between al-Mansūr and 'Isā b. Mūsā at this time to be indicative of the thinking underlying the 'Abbāsids' view on the succession,³ and the event shows that there had been little harmony in the 'Abbāsid family since the initial establishment of their rule. In 151/768 al-Mansūr, however, renewed the oath of allegiance guaranteeing his son and 'Isā b. Mūsā as his successors respectively.⁴ The reason behind this divergence seems to be the desire of the Caliphs to pass on the authority to their direct progeny. It seems that they did not pay much attention to the friction caused thereby and which, as we shall see, was to result in the removal of all real authority from their hands into those of more capable elements in the administration.

According to Ibn Qutayba, as the news of al-Mansūr's death reached the capital, Ja'far - the eldest son of al-Mansūr - proclaimed himself the Caliph instead of his brother al-Mahdī. But when the latter shortly after arrived in Baghdad the former submitted to his authority and excused

1. Yaqubi, III, 96; Tab., III, 125-127; Azdi, pp. 200-201.

2. Ibn Khayyāṭ, II, 452; cf. Dinawarī, p. 382.

3. Anwar G. Chejne, Succession to the Rule in Islam, Lahore, 1960, p. 82.

4. Azdi, p. 214.

himself for his misconduct.¹ Barely one year after his accession to the Caliphate, al-Mahdī 158-169/775-785 followed the precedent set by his father and endeavoured to assure that his son would succeed him. Al-Mahdī wrote to 'Īsā b. Mūsā, who had made his residence in Kūfa, demanding that he appear before him.² This 'Īsā refused to do, but at the end of a long correspondence he finally capitulated, signing the document of abdication in the presence of many witnesses, comprising Hāshimites, mawālī, Qurashites, viziers, secretaries and judges.³ The Caliph clearly wanted to make the resignation as widely known as possible, and for this reason he ordered the statement of abdication to be read publicly in the main mosque. Thereupon in 160/776 homage was paid to his son Mūsā as crown-prince under the name of al-Hādī.⁴

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1. Ibn Qutayba, II, 151. But it is reported that Ja'far died in the year 150/767. Azdi, p. 211.
 2. Yaqubi, III, 107; Tab., III, 974-6; Azdi, p. 238.
 3. Azdi, p. 238. On one occasion al-Mahdī became impatient and wrote to 'Īsā saying that if he did not comply with the request and resign, so that the oath of allegiance could be made to Mūsā and Hārūn, his sons, he would deem it lawful to treat him as a rebel. On the other hand, if he consented to the request, he would be given in return that which is more profitable and more immediately useful than the Caliphate. Tab., III, 468; Anwar G. Chejne, p. 87.
 4. Al-Ya'qūbī includes it with the events of the year 159/775 and simply mentions that, shortly after, Hārūn was proclaimed as the successor of al-Hādī. The price paid for this resignation was estimated to be one million dirham and certain landed properties. Yaqubi, III, 107; Azdi, p. 238.

The clash of wills and temperaments among the members of the royal family became apparent as the question of succession developed. Al-Hādī, the designated heir, remained closer to the Capital than his younger brother, Hārūn, who was sent away on expeditions against Byzantium. But shortly afterwards, in 162/778, the caliph had Hārūn proclaimed second in line to the throne.¹

N. Abbott, in her socio-political study of the period under consideration, suggests that al-Hādī, who had every prospect of a long life and was already the father of several children, could hardly be expected to be enthusiastic over Hārūn's heirship, especially as he felt that the undercurrents of the harem and the court were against him.²

The harmony which might be expected between the Caliph and his sons did not last for long because new promotions became involved in the dispute over the succession. Khayzurān, for example, who was the favourite wife of al-Mahdī, wished her younger son Hārūn to be the first in line of succession. He was also supported by the

1. Dinawarī, p. 382; Hārūn came in for such considerations as a result of his successful campaign against the Byzantines, which resulted in the favourable treaty of 165/782 with the Empress Irene. Moreover, one should not overlook the influence of Hārūn's sympathisers especially that of his mother Khayzurān and the Barāmika. Tab., III, 1, 494-95, 503-5; Azdī, pp. 243, 246. Al-Azdī states that al-Mahdī proclaimed Hārūn as successor to al-Hādī in 166/782. Azdī, p. 247.

2. N. Abbott, Two Queens of Baghdad, Chicago, 1946. p. 69.

Barāmika.¹ Al-Mahdī seems to have come under pressure from his wife and her supporters. Therefore, the father and his son, al-Hādī, drifted further apart. In consequence, it was decided to send al-Hādī on an expedition to the region of Jurjān, east of the Caspian sea. There is certain evidence to show that the Caliph and his son held divergent views on the policy to be pursued in this region.² During this campaign the conflict between the two grew wider and deeper. In the meantime, al-Mahdī had to place Hārūn ahead of al-Hādī in the line of succession. And in 169/785-86, he sent some leading members of the royal family to inform his son of the new arrangement, but the delegation failed to win al-Hādī's agreement. The Caliph then sent a group

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1. Hārūn received his first instruction and training at the hands of Khālīd b. Barmak, and his connection with the family of the latter, especially with the Khālīd's son Yaḥyā, was to continue into his own Caliphate. It was claimed that there were certain foster-relationships between the Barāmika and the 'Abbāsids, one of them being that of Hārūn and Faḍl b. Yaḥyā. N. Abbott, p. 63; *EI*², s.v., Barāmika. Moreover, Yaḥyā was the real manager and administrator of Hārūn's governmental affairs. Tab., II, 545.
 2. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, *'Iqd al-Farīd*, Cairo 1293/1876, I, 70. It was clear that al-Mahdī relented in his opposition to Ibrāhīm al-Harrānī, whom he now allowed to accompany al-Hādī. He might have been partly responsible for al-Hādī's attitude towards his father, which is in evidence shortly after, when the Caliph summoned Ibrāhīm to the capital and al-Hādī rejected the demand. Tab., III, 583; *Kamīl*, VI, 70; *Fakhri*, pp. 142-143; cf. Yaḥyā, III, 112; Azdi, pp. 253-254 and Dinawarī, p. 382 who do not mention that any kind of conflict existed between the Caliph and his son. They simply stated that the Caliph died during his expedition to Jurjān.

of freedmen with instructions to bring al-Hādī back to the Capital; once again he refused to comply. Thereupon al-Mahdī set out to subdue his stubborn son in person, but did not reach him, because of his sudden death.¹ N. Abbott sees al-Mahdī's death as an end of one period of Khayzurān's life, and the beginning of another, saying that behind him was youth, success and happiness, while ahead lay maturity, power and tragedy.²

The atmosphere of intrigue and distrust was to affect the family relationships of the dynasty throughout the future years, influencing thereby the politico-religious institution on which the state was based. It is noticeable that until this time the struggle for the succession was confined to individuals of direct 'Abbāsīd descent, i.e. the Caliph and his sons or uncles, though there were others behind the scenes who were encouraging the parties in one way or another. The Caliph always sought to keep the power in the hands of his favourite son up to the period under consideration, when the main reason for the conflict in the Empire seems to have been exclusively the problem of succession.

At the time of al-Mahdī the courtiers seem to have gained a direct influence in governmental affairs.³

1. Tab., III, 523; Kamil, VI, 54.

2. N. Abbott, p. 76.

3. The blind poet Bashshār b. Burd, partly out of his personal grievances and partly out of public indignation, composed a scathing verse that not only devoured the Caliph and his vizier but had political and dynastic implications. "O Sons of Umayyah," cried the poet, "wake up". Too long have you been asleep. Verily, Ya'qūb b. Dāwūd is the Caliph. O People, your Caliphate is ruined! Look for the Caliph amidst the wineskin and the lute." Tab., III, 487-90, 508-1; Jahshiyari, pp. 185-6; Fakhri, pp. 136-37; cf. N. Abbott, p. 6.

Their influence led the Caliph to change his earlier nomination to the succession, and to designate his younger son as a first heir apparent, instead of the eldest.¹ Ultimately the Caliph's plan was foiled by his sudden death. Nevertheless, this action by the Caliph was to open a new phase in the history of the family and the involvement of the secretaries and courtiers in this conflict became inevitable. Moreover, for the first time in the history of the family the Caliph-elect knew in advance that a rival, in this case his own brother, might try to overthrow him. Until the end of al-Mahdī's reign the Caliphs could be considered the dominant figure in the policy of the Empire; and even though his policy might be supported by certain personalities, they remained behind the scene and superficially it appeared that the Caliph was in supreme control of the court.

During the reign of al-Mahdī, especially in its later phase, the policy of the court was influenced by courtiers and self-interested individuals. Al-Hādī's accession, in 169/785, caused great discontent among those who favoured his brother Hārūn. When the inhabitants of the capital received the news of the Caliph's death while al-Hādī was

1. It is reported that Rayṭah, the Caliph's other wife, gave him two sons, 'Ubayd Allāh and 'Alī, born in 145/762 and 147/764, respectively. Though both boys grew to manhood, held important positions, and outlived their father, neither of them, despite their mother's royal descent, was ever considered for the Caliphate. Tab., III, 550-51; Baghdad, X, 311; XII, 54; cf. Mubarrad, al-Kāmil ed. W. Wright, Leipzig, 1864, pp. 389-90.

still on campaign in Jurjān,¹ riots broke out in the city.² Khayzurān sent for both Rabī' b. Yūnus and Yaḥyā b. Barmak; the former answered her summons and was placed in control of affairs, while Yaḥyā remained aloof, fearing al-Hādī's displeasure should he appear to be co-operating with Khayzurān. Al-Hādī himself suspected his mother of being behind the plot to replace him by Hārūn who enjoyed the support of Yaḥyā.³ But Yaḥyā had already advised Hārūn to accept al-Hādī's right to the succession and to pay him due homage.⁴ Hārūn, however, with the help of his dignitaries had succeeded in quelling the riot, and bribed the army into good behaviour by offering them two years' pay.⁵

As soon as the Caliph al-Hādī arrived in Baghdad, he decided to appoint Rabī' b. Yūnus as his first vizier, despite the warning letter which he had sent to Rabī', threatening him with death. Moreover, the Caliph allowed Yaḥyā to continue the administration of the property of his brother, Hārūn, who was now next in line of succession.⁶

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1. The province of Jurjān lay at the south-eastern corner of the Caspian and consisted for the most part of the broad plains and valleys watered by the two rivers Jurjān and Atrak. Le Strange, p. 376.
 2. Tab., III, 545-46; Kamil, VI, 58-59.
 3. Supra p.32, footnote, I.
 4. Yaqubi, III, 113; Tab., III, 545; Azdi, p. 257. Muruji, VI, 261; Kamil, VI, 54; Baghdad, XIII, 21-22.
 5. Tab., III, 546. Another narrative by Faḍl. b. Sulaymān indicates that the pay was for eighteen months only. Ibid., 547.
 6. Tab., III, 546-48; Muruji, VI, 265; Kamil, VI, 59-60; Jahshiyari, p. 197; N. Abbott, pp. 79-80; cf. Anwar G. Chejne, pp. 90-91.

During the first few months of his reign, al-Hādī apparently allowed his mother all the privileges and freedom she had enjoyed under his father; for instance, she used to entertain Yahyā, Rabī' and several other retainers at her house.¹ Later al-Hādī grew suspicious of her activities and a letter was sent to her, warning her not to entertain any more visitors from among either the generals or the statesmen.² The Caliph went even further and bitterly criticized his mother for actions which he regarded as exceeding the bounds of feminine modesty, and for her improperly lavish generosity. The Caliph stated that it was not dignified for women to interfere in affairs of state, and commanded his mother to concentrate on religious observances and to accept the sound role required of her sex.³ The Caliph then called together his generals and excused them for paying so much attention to his mother's orders. On hearing of this public humiliation, Khayzurān reacted strongly, dissociating herself from all he might do, vowing that she would never again speak to him. She did in fact keep her vow and was never again in his presence until his death.⁴

N. Abbott comments on this relationship, and says that mother and son were openly at war, each plotting the downfall of the other. The first round, only partially

1. For details concerning the role of Khayzurān at the court see N. Abbott, pp. 54ff.

2. Tab., III, 569; Muruj, VI, 269-70; Kamil, VI, 68.

3. Tab., III, 569-71; Muruj, VI, 282-83.

4. Tab., III, 571; Kamil, VI, 69.

successful, went to al-Hādī; the second, swift and final round brought victory to Khayzurān. Between the two rounds the fate of Yaḥyā and Hārūn hung in the balance.¹

The Caliph's policy towards the succession seems to have been influenced by certain courtiers whose own fate depended completely on the Caliph and his future successor. These dignitaries took advantage of the situation and encouraged al-Hādī to exclude his brother from the line of succession, nominating his nine year old son Ja'far, instead.² Al-Hādī was resentful of his brother Hārūn and did not feel certain about his loyalty. This is clearly apparent even from the events which took place in the early years of his reign.³

In any case, the Caliph succeeded for a while in isolating Hārūn by threatening everyone who attempted to associate with him; but Yaḥyā and his son Faḍl did not break off their connections. When al-Hādī invited Yaḥyā to his palace to discuss the matter of the succession, the

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1. N. Abbott, p. 92. It is related that al-Hādī went so far as to send his mother a dish of poisoned rice, but Khayzurān discovered his plot. Al-Hādī, awaiting results, sent to enquire how his mother liked the dish and was disappointed to learn that his plot had failed. Thwarted in his purpose, he sent back this reply: "You did not eat it, for had you eaten it, I would certainly have been rid of you now. When did a Caliph ever prosper who had a (living) mother?" Tab., III, 570-71; TBN, fol. 59a; Kamil, VI, 68; N. Abbott, p. 104.
 2. Yaqubi, III, 115; Tab., III, 571ff. Personalities such as Yazīd b. Mazyad, Muḥammad b. Farūkh al-Azdī, 'Abd Allāh b. Mālik and 'Alī b. 'Isā who were among the most intimate friends of the Caliph.
 3. For details of the distrust between brothers see Tab., III, 576-77.

latter stressed the dangers of encouraging the renunciation of allegiance to the succession and establishing a precedent which might easily lead later to the harm of his son, Ja'far. Finally Yahyā advised the Caliph to retain his brother as first in line, and nominate his son as second in succession. The Caliph seems to have yielded to Yahyā's arguments and commended him for his excellent advice, implying that he would follow it.¹ Yahyā further suggested to al-Hādī that he should wait until Ja'far came of age and then he could summon Hārūn and make him renounce the succession.² Whatever may have been al-Hādī's true intention, his generals were adamant that Ja'far should be nominated the Caliph's successor instead of Hārūn. Yahyā grew fearful of the suspicions of al-Hādī and apparently kept himself aloof from Khayzurān, so as to avoid further complications from that quarter.³

Intrigues and plots became the normal political activity of the capital, with two clearly distinct groups engaged in the struggle - the Caliph and his supporters on one side and Hārūn, the Barāmika, Khayzurān and their factions on the other.⁴ When Yahyā felt he was becoming isolated from the affairs of state after the death of the

1. Tab., III, 573-74; Kamil, VI, 65; Jahshiyari, pp. 202-1; cf. Anwar G. Chejne, p. 91. Al-Azdī states that Yahyā claimed to have important things to say, therefore the Caliph allowed him to speak. Azdi, p. 260.

2. Tab., III, 574-5; Muruj, VI, 281, Kamil, VI.

3. Tab., III, 575.

4. Tab., III, 572ff.

vizier Rabī' b. Yūnus, he intrigued to have one of his own trusted men appointed as secretary to the new vizier, Ibrāhīm b. al-Harrānī, in order to be kept informed of new developments.¹ Yahyā at the same time recommended to Hārūn that he absent himself from the capital on the pretext of going on a hunting trip.² Even this deepened the suspicions of the Caliph's factions, and they renewed their opposition to Yahyā, suggesting that he had ulterior motives in removing Hārūn from their observation and with the help of certain governors they were planning to murder Yahyā for partisanship towards Hārūn, in order to maintain their own supremacy.³ When the Caliph again approached Yahyā to secure his consent to the change in the succession, the latter would not change his position and both he and Hārūn were imprisoned on the grounds of having plotted revolution.⁴ Hārūn, however, was condemned in public as unfit for the succession. The generals were planning to kill both Hārūn and Yahyā; however, the sudden death of the Caliph brought this plot to naught.

C. Brockelmann considers the death of al-Hādī as one of the early defects through which the 'Abbāsīd dynasty finally perished.⁵ E.A. Balyaev emphasises the importance of the courtiers' rivalry and considers it the main reason

1. Tab., III, 572 & 598; Jahshiyari, pp. 199-200.

2. Tab., III, 575; Muruj, VI, 281.

3. Tab., III, 598, 600.

4. Tab., III, 599-600; Muruj, VI, 280-81; Kamil, VI, 69.

5. C. Brockelmann, History of the Muslim Peoples, tr. by T. Carmichael and M. Perlman, New York 1960, p. 114.

for the end of al-Hādī and the accession of Hārūn.¹

As the news of al-Hādī's death spread, a group of soldiers under the command of General Harthama b. A'yūn,² rushed towards the palace and threatened the young Prince Ja'far, whom al-Hādī had appointed as his successor. Then Ja'far submitted to their terms and publicly abdicated the Caliphate on the following morning, declaring that it belonged to his uncle Hārūn and that he did not have any claim to it.³ This statement, however, shows clearly that the Caliph's power had decreased, and the real masters of the Empire were those who had the army behind them. Moreover, the main reason for the weakening of the Caliph's position was the conflict with his family concerning the succession, which allowed the courtiers, generals, and statesmen to play a free hand in government affairs on the one hand and to increase their supremacy on the other.

Al-Rashīd, who ascended the throne in 170/787, had endured many hardships in his struggle for power, even having had his life threatened; yet, in spite of the troubles he had himself experienced, once he became the Caliph, he followed the same policy as his predecessors with regard to the succession. Though not unaware of the dangerous consequences which such a policy could produce, he could not overcome his natural desire to maintain the

1. E.A. Belyaev, Arabs, Islam and the Arab Caliphate in the Early Middle Ages, tr. by A. Gourevitch, London, 1969, p. 198.

2. EI², s.v., Harthama b. A'yūn.

3. Tab., III, 602-3; Azdi, p. 261.

Caliphate within his own progeny, not only nominating them as his successors, but in fact, dividing the Empire for their benefit. The Caliph, at the time of his accession, was content to follow his mother's advice and relieve himself of certain responsibilities by entrusting them to Yahyā.¹ Later, however, after the death of Khayzurān, in 173/789, this humiliating situation began to weigh upon him, the more since the desire to impose his own will increased.² Professor Watt considers this change in attitude as the beginning of the Caliphs' search for a solid basis for their power, adding that it initiated the conflict between the autocratic bloc and the constitutionalists.³ In 175/792, al-Rashīd nominated his five year old son, Muḥammad (later al-Amin) as his successor and it was generally believed that the Caliph was influenced in this by the fact that the boy was of pure Arab blood, as well as by his affection for his mother, Zubayda.⁴ More senior 'Abbāsīd

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1. Tab., III, 603-4; Muruj, VI, 288; EI², s.v. Barāmika.
 2. EI², s.v. Barāmika; C. Brockelmann, pp. 114-115. Al-Azdī reports that in this year (173/789) al-Rashīd announced the appointment of his son as governor of Iraq and al-Shām. Azdi, p. 270, but we do not know which son.
 3. W. Montgomery Watt, Islamic Political Thought, Edinburgh, 1968, p. 85.
 4. Tab., III, 610-11; Dinawarī, p. 383; Kamil, VI, 83. Regarding al-Rashīd's relationships with other members of the family, it was said that he was honoured by his half brother Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī as a result of the influence of Ja'far b. Yahyā: Tab., III, 673. Al-Rashīd also appointed his brother 'Ubayd Allāh governor of Egypt: Kindi, p. 137.

pretenders denounced this nomination because of Muhammad's immaturity, but the Caliph eventually got his wish when al-Faḍl b. Yahyā, at the persuasion of Zubayda, secured the allegiance of Khurāsān to the young Crown Prince, after which other provinces followed suit.¹

In 182-83/798-799, al-Rashīd repeated his own experience under al-Hādī by nominating his son 'Abd Allāh (later al-Ma'mūn) as second in the line of succession,² the reason being, we are told, that 'Abd Allāh's natural wit exceeded that of his brother Muhammad.³ But after the decision, al-Rashīd seems to have been worried about the future of his sons, aware of the jealousy and antagonism of al-Amīn towards his brother, which was instigated by his mother and the Hāshimites.⁴

Zubayda was jealous of al-Ma'mūn, especially after he had been designated second in line of succession, and she increased her efforts on behalf of her son. As a consequence of this al-Ma'mūn was appointed to the governorship of Khurāsān which was on the whole the most turbulent province to control. The Caliph, however, was aware of both the difficult circumstances in that region and the plot

1. Yaqubi, III, 117; Tab., III, 611; Baghdad, IX, 138-39; EI², s.v. Barāmika; cf. Anwar G. Chejne, pp. 93-94.

2. Dinawarī, pp. 383, 385; cf. Ibn al-'Ibrī, The Chronography of Bar Hebraeus, ed. tr. by E.A. Wallis Budge, Oxford, 1932, I, 122. He states that al-Rashīd did not declare al-Ma'mūn as successor but only al-Amīn and al-Qāsim.

3. Yaqubi, III, 122, Tab., III, 647 & 652; Muruj, VI, 323-25; Kamil, VI, 110.

4. It is clear that the rivalry between the half-brothers, so opposed in natural gifts and character and yet both so close to their father's heart from the start, began to be felt quite early in his reign. Dinawarī, pp. 383-4; Muruj, VI, 20-22.

against his son. He therefore allocated to him considerable forces.¹ Zubayda saw in this a danger to her own son's ambitions, and protested to the Caliph himself. Al-Mas'ūdī describes the Caliph's reaction, stating that he quite evidently lost his patience, and rebuked his wife severely for meddling in the affairs of his Empire.² At the same time he pointed out that al-Ma'mūn had greater need for military forces than al-Amin. The Caliph dismissed her complaint with the words, "We fear for 'Abd Allāh at the hands of your son, and fear not for your son at the hands of 'Abd Allāh".³

Although al-Rashīd was in more complete control of the affairs of the state and the dynasty than his two predecessors had been, even he could find no acceptable solution to the problem of the succession that could assure harmony in the realm. He foresaw the dangers which the dynasty might have to face after his death, and he sought to identify each of the sensitive provinces with a member of the 'Abbāsīd family. Thus in 186/802, he designated another son, al-Qāsim, as third in line to the throne, and

1. Muruji, VI, 325-26; cf. Dinawarī, p. 384. E.A. Belyaev considers this appointment as an additional possibility of exploitation of the working masses by the local feudal lords and the upper classes in the cities, p. 199. But Belyaev seems to have been influenced by his own belief and tried to draw an analogy between the present politico-economic life of his country with that of the 'Abbāsīd period.

2. Muruji, VI, 325.

3. Ibn Qutayba, II, 173-74; Muruji, VI, 325-26; cf. N. Abbott, p. 187.

divided his Empire among the three potential successors.¹ In this al-Rashīd might have been inspired not only by the wish to safeguard the succession of his own sons against many 'Abbāsīd and 'Alīd contenders, but also by the desire to insure 'Abbāsīd authority over the provinces.²

In the same year the Caliph went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, accompanied by his three sons, and he took advantage of the occasion to demand from each an oath and a written declaration that they would respect the order of succession that he had laid down. Failure to comply with this oath would incur the severest penalties, short of death, permitted by the law of Islam.³ Al-Rashīd ordered that these documents should be hung on the door of Ka'ba, and that copies be sent to all provinces so that every individual in the Empire

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1. Al-Amīn held, according to the decree of al-Rashīd, Iraq, Miṣr, and all western provinces; Al-Ma'mūn regained the area from Hamadhān to the eastern border of the Empire; Al-Qāsim held Jazīra, and the frontier lands facing Byzantium. Tab., III, 652-53; Dinawarī, pp. 385-86. Ibn al-A'tham says that al-Rashīd had not intended to nominate al-Qāsim as a third successor but it was suggested to him and he, indeed, appreciated the idea. Ibn al-A'tham II, 253b; also Azdi, pp. 302-03.
 2. EI², s.v. Hārūn al-Rashīd.
 3. In the first of these documents, al-Amīn acknowledged al-Ma'mūn's right of immediate succession to himself, and his virtually absolute sovereignty over the eastern half of the Empire; in the second one, al-Ma'mūn took recognizance of these rights, and declared in turn his loyalty and obedience to his brother as Caliph, whether or not the latter had respected his obligations. Tab., III, 657-667; Ibn al-A'tham, II, 254b; EI², s.v. al-Amīn.

would know of them.¹

In 189/805 the Barāmika fell from power, but were almost immediately replaced by another family of Persian origin. Faḍl b. Sahl who had been the secretary of Ja'far b. Yaḥyā, had come into close contact with Hārūn. According to D. Sourdel, the Barāmika played no major rôle in the nomination of al-Ma'mūn as second in succession.² But Faḍl b. Sahl seems to have employed a considerable influence in seeking to bring him to the Caliphate, and he became his most trusted adviser and an aspirant to the vizierate.³

During the latter part of al-Rashīd's reign, the party lines were already drawn: al-Amīn was supported by his mother and Faḍl b. Rabī', while al-Ma'mūn's cause was championed by the Sahl family.⁴ It was clear that, this time, the struggle for the throne was accompanied by the struggle for the vizierate as well.⁵ This could be regarded as a turning point in the history of the royal family. And it indicates that the split among the 'Abbāsids had reached a crucial state which in the future became manifest in civil war and the subsequent dismemberment of their Empire. Ambitions to the succession among members of the dynasty

1. Yaqubi, III, 122-127; Tab., III, 654-667; Kamil, VI, 117.

2. EI², s.v. Barāmika; cf. Tab., III, 741.

3. Tab., III, 709; Fakhri, p. 166; EI², s.v. Faḍl. b. Sahl.

4. Cf. Anwar G. Chejne, p. 104.

5. Cf. EI², s.v. al-Amīn; EI², s.v. Faḍl b. Sahl.

were the focal points for political partisan activity by diverse sections of the community, and once having put their candidate into office each of these groups used its authority for its own purposes.

In 189/805 also, al-Rashīd attempted to settle this dissention between his two sons and their sympathizers by re-affirming the decision which had been agreed upon concerning the succession.¹ Shortly after, a rebellion in the eastern part of the Empire brought, at this time, further upset to the peace of the Empire, and al-Rashīd led a military campaign in person to suppress it.² The Caliph had decided to take his two viziers on the campaign and leave his three heirs behind, but Faḍl b. Sahl advised al-Ma'mūn to find some way to accompany his father, and this he succeeded in doing.³ The purpose behind this plan was that if al-Rashīd, who seemed very ill, should die during the campaign, al-Ma'mūn would be away from the capital and be secure in his eastern provinces. It was clear that violent trouble over the succession was anticipated, and the immediate objective of al-Faḍl in such an event, was the safety of al-Ma'mūn in a situation where he could make adequate preparations for his own challenge.⁴

1. Yaqubi, III, 129-30; Tab., III, 704.

2. Tab., III, 730-31; Dinawarī, p. 387.

3. Tab., III, 730-31; cf. Dinawarī, p. 387; Azdi, p. 312.

Ibn al-A'tham reports that when al-Rashīd felt seriously sick his son al-Ma'mūn was summoned, and appointed as leader of this military campaign, then dispatched towards Marū. Ibn al-A'tham, II, 256a.

4. Tab., III, 730-35; Kamil, VI, 141-142; cf. R. Levy, A Baghdad Chronicle, Cambridge, 1929, p. 69.

The will made by the Caliph al-Rashīd in itself contained the seeds of an explosive political situation. The contracts he had made demanded a great deal of sincerity and loyalty on the part of both al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn. Moreover, one should not overlook a de facto division of the Empire, which exerted some influence on the relationship between the brothers. This situation was also intensified by the antagonism and rivalries of the dignitaries who wished to secure their own ambitions. It was under such circumstances that al-Amīn ascended the throne in 193/809, while his brother al-Ma'mūn was in Merv (Marū).¹ Al-Amīn (192-198/809-813) had already prepared letters containing instructions to al-Ma'mūn (203-218/819-833) and other important men who were on campaign with his father, and entrusted them to one of his secret agents, who was to deliver them in the event of Hārūn's death.² Although al-Ma'mūn accepted al-Rashīd's testament, paying homage to his brother as Caliph, and recognising himself as successor,³ al-Amīn's instructions in these letters made him suspicious of his brother's intentions.

1. Azdi, p. 317; Ibn Qutayba, II, 174.

2. Tab., III, 765-72; Kamil, VI, 152-53.

3. Tab., III, 773; Jahshiyari, pp. 289-90; Al-Azdi indicates in one of his accounts that al-Ma'mūn took the homage for himself only on the ground that when al-Rashīd had felt seriously sick, he had designated the Caliphate to his son al-Ma'mūn instead of al-Amīn. Azdi, pp. 317-18; Ibn al-A'tham, II, 256a.

His attitude seems to have been encouraged by al-Faḍl b. Sahl, who swore that he would secure the administration of Khurāsān for al-Ma'mūn.¹

During the first year of al-Amīn's reign little correspondence took place between himself and al-Ma'mūn, who remained in the eastern provinces as governor, and sent precious gifts, including furniture, vessels, musk, animals and weapons to his brother in Baghdad.²

In the same year al-Amīn approved the right of his brothers, al-Ma'mūn and al-Qāsim, to administer and govern the provinces which al-Rashīd had allotted to them in his testament.³ But after a short while, al-Qāsim was dismissed from his post as governor of his provinces and was replaced by one of al-Amīn's generals.⁴ In 194/810, al-Amīn introduced the name of his own son, Mūsā, into the Friday prayer, an action which led to a deterioration in the relationships between the brothers,⁵ and which can be considered as the beginning of the clash between them, in as much as it implied the violation of the Meccan document which had already been signed by both parties.⁶ Moreover,

1. Tab., III, 773; Jahshiyari, pp. 289-90: Al-Ma'mūn became more suspicious when al-Amīn refused to let his family leave for Khurāsān. Tab., III, 787-88; Jahshiyari, p. 290.

2. Tab., III, 775; Kamil, VI, 155; cf. Tanbih, p. 445.

3. Supra, p. 44, footnote I.

4. Tab., III, 776; Azdi, p. 318.

5. Tab., III, 776; Jahshiyari, p. 290; Kamil, VI, 156; cf. Azdi, p. 319.

6. Tab., III, 654-667; Ibn al-A'tham, II, 254b.

this action was to create a new phase in the history of the discord in the royal family, which would lead finally to a real confrontation between the two brothers, and to a civil war. Thus al-Rashīd's ill-advised testament was behind the civil war when he attempted to give his son al-Ma'mūn an independent position.¹

Al-Amīn's introduction of his son's name into the Friday prayer was followed by a brisk exchange of diplomatic correspondence between the two brothers, who were supported respectively by the vizier al-Faḍl b. Rabī' and the future vizier al-Faḍl b. Sahl.² Therefore, the rivalry between the two provinces, i.e. Iraq and Khurāsān, became extremely dangerous and strict security measures were introduced, including the control of travellers and merchants.³

Al-Amīn went even further and deprived al-Ma'mūn of his right as first in succession, and nominated his own son Mūsā instead. In the following year 195/811 a decree was passed that prayers must only be said in the name of the Caliph and his son as successor.⁴ It was on the advice of al-Faḍl b. Rabī' that al-Amīn removed his brother from his

1. H.A.R. Gibb. "The Caliphate and the Arab States", History of the Crusades, Vol. I, ed. Setton and Baldwin, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955, 82.

2. Tab., III, 776ff; Jahshiyari, pp. 291-98. This correspondence did not last for long, and al-Amīn tried in vain to persuade his brother to leave his province and come to Baghdad. Behind these exchanges were not the brothers themselves, but the two Faḍls who wanted to maintain their supremacy. Al-Amīn and his supporters aimed at putting an end to al-Ma'mūn.

3. Tab., III, 782-83.

4. Tab., III, 794-97; Kamil, VI, 164-65; cf. Azdi, p. 314.

rightful place in the succession and substituted his own son.¹ The struggle for power between the brothers, which was encouraged by self-interested dignitaries, developed into a civil war which degraded the 'Abbāsids in the eyes of their subjects.

When the news reached al-Ma'mūn in Khurāsān that he had been deprived of his right to succession, he renounced his loyalty and obedience to the Caliph and called himself imām al-hudā.² He was considered a rebel, and in order to suppress any attempt at revolt on his part the Caliph despatched the general 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān as head of a campaign against Khurāsān.³ Serious as this open break between the two brothers was, in respect of the fortunes of the dynasty, no less did it affect the integrity of the Empire, for now Khurāsān and Iraq were set one against the other, and Persian and Arab were virtually invited into conflict.⁴ The campaign was a failure and cost the general

1. Tab., III, 777; Jahshiyari, 290; EI², s.v. Faḍl b. Rabī': Faḍl was also encouraged by the general 'Alī b. 'Īsā b. Māhān. Tab., III, 777; Yaqubi, III, 138; cf. Al-Azdī who stated that the senior members of the 'Abbāsid family who stood by al-Amīn were the people who advised al-Amīn to deprive his brother from the line of succession, and nominate his son instead. Azdi, p. 319; see also Ibn Qutayba, II 175.

2. Tab., III, 797.

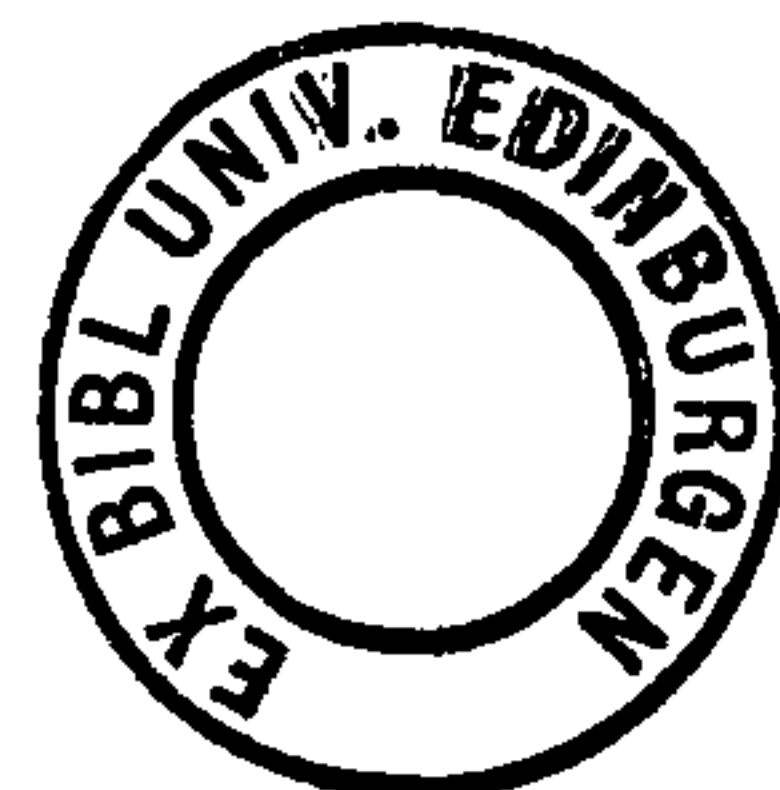
3. Tab., III, pp. 796-97; Jahshiyari, p. 293; Dinawarī, pp. 393-94.

4. The civil war has been interpreted, on doubtful evidence, as a national conflict between Arabs and Persians, ending in the victory of the latter. It was more probably a continuation of the social struggle of the immediately preceding period, combined with a regional rather than national conflict between Persia and Iraq. B. Lewis, The Arab in History, London, 1966, p. 94.

his life,¹ weakening the situation of al-Amīn and strengthening that of al-Ma'mūn.² Moreover, al-Amīn's supporters were disunited and began to have doubts about persevering in their allegiance to the Caliph. Such an attitude was clearly demonstrated when a group of dissatisfied soldiers dethroned al-Amīn and announced their allegiance to al-Ma'mūn. Al-Amīn, however, was detained for two days in one of the royal palaces, although after some heavy fighting among his troops the rebels were overcome and al-Amīn was restored to the throne.³

During the civil war which followed, al-Amīn's governor of Mecca and Medina, Dāwūd b. 'Īsā al-'Abbāsī, paid allegiance to al-Ma'mūn, who, according to 'Īsā, had the right to oppose his brother because the latter neglected the testament issued by al-Rashīd.⁴ In this he was supported by others who were aware of the disposition of al-Rashīd.⁵

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1. Yaqubi, III, 138-39; Tab., III, 796ff.; Azdi, pp. 322-23; R. Levy, p. 72; cf. D. Sourdcl, "La Politique Religieuse du Calife 'Abbāsīde al-Ma'mūn", REI, XXX, 1962, p. 37.
 2. Yaqubi, III, 138; Tab., III, 787-88; Jahshiyari, p. 290.
 3. Ibn Khayyāṭ, II, 504; Yaqubi, III, 140-41; Tab., III, 848-49, 851; Azdi, p. 325.
 4. Cf. p. 45. footnote I. It was reported that Basra followed the same line of policy towards al-Amīn, and in 196/812, people there paid homage to al-Ma'mūn, and the governor al-Mansūr b. al-Mahdī was the one who administered the oath of allegiance; so, also, did Kūfa with its governor al-Faḍl b. 'Abbās b. Mūsā b. 'Īsā. Tab., III, 856-57; Azdi, p. 325.
 5. Tab., III, 860-63; Kamil, VI, 184-85; cf. Yaqubi, III, 140-41.



While the conflict between the two brothers worsened, certain other members of the 'Abbāsid family left al-Amīn and joined al-Ma'mūn on the same grounds. Notable among these were al-Qāsim b. al-Rashīd, who was third in succession, and al-Manṣūr b. al-Mahdī; later, when the situation had deteriorated gravely, some other members of the family, including Ibrāhīm b. 'al-Mahdī, who later was to become Caliph, joined al-Ma'mūn against his brother.¹ The climax of this struggle was the murder of al-Amīn in 198/813 and the recognition of al-Ma'mūn as the Caliph by the victorious army.² The outcome of this war was to weaken not only the position of the 'Abbāsid family, but that of the Arabs as a whole, reducing them to a minor status and excluding them later from the imperial army.

The Caliph, despite the theoretical absolutism implicit in his office, now shared his power with his courtiers, who were ultimately to become the real rulers of the Empire, while he was merely a tool in their hands. Nor did al-Ma'mūn's victory signal the end of the rivalry and jealousy among the members of the royal family.³ On the contrary, there now began a period of intense intrigue amongst the powerful elements of the Capital, in which the members of the

1. Yaqubi, III, 141-42; Tab., III, 914; Kamil, VI, 174; cf. Azdi, p. 328.

2. Ibn Khayyāt, II, 505; Yaqubi, III, 141; Azdi, pp. 329-31.

3. Muruj, VII, 67 & 78. In 198/819, after al-Ma'mūn became Caliph, he denied his brother al-Qāsim his right to succession as al-Rashīd had commanded. Tab., III, 659, 762; Azdi, pp. 331-32; cf. Ibn Khayyāt who states that the dismissal of al-Qāsim took place in 201/817, shortly after the announcement of 'Alī al-Riḍa as successor to the throne. Ibn Khayyāt, II, 508.

'Abbāsīd family, and their ambitions for the succession, were used to further the purposes of the parties who lent them their support. The dynasty was still without principles of succession.¹

The people of Baghdad were angry at the transference of the capital to the eastern provinces, and in their eyes al-Ma'mūn was seen as a tool of the eastern people and the enemy of the house of 'Abbās.² Therefore, the senior members of the 'Abbāsīd family were determined to depose him, and in this, perhaps, they had the support of the inhabitants of Baghdad who tried to persuade al-Manṣūr b. al-Mahdī to take over the Caliphate but he refused. When the anti-Ma'mūn gathering insisted, al-Manṣūr agreed to be the governor of Baghdad on the condition that they would continue to recognize al-Ma'mūn as the real Caliph.³

The nomination of 'Alī al-Riḍā, in 201/817 as a successor to al-Ma'mūn created an uproar in Baghdad.⁴ Therefore, Ibrāhīm al-Mahdī (201-203/817-819) was appointed as Caliph instead of al-Ma'mūn and Ishāq b. Mūsā b. al-Mahdī was designated as his successor.⁵ During his first Friday prayer, a few 'Abbāsīd notables paid Ibrāhīm their homage;

1. Cf. D. Sourdél, Islam, tr. by D. Scott, New York, 1964, p. 24.

2. Anwar G. Chejne, p. 116.

3. Tab., III, 1001.

4. Ibn Khayyāt, II, 508; Azdi, p. 342.

5. Tab., III, 1014; other sources do not indicate Ishāq as successor to Ibrāhīm. Ibn Khayyāt, II, 508; Jahshiyari, p. 312; Azdi, p. 342.

for example, 'Ubayd Allāh al-'Abbās b. Muḥammad al-Hāshimī, al-Manṣūr b. al-Mahdī, and all the Banū Hāshim.¹ When al-Ma'mūn finally became aware of the dangerous situation in Baghdad he decided that he would have to return, but before he entered the city he had his favourite vizier Faḍl b. Sahl murdered and in 203/819 his successor 'Alī al-Riḍā.² Knowing of his approach, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī went into hiding and did not reappear for eight months.³ Later, when he presented himself before the Caliph, he was discharged, and simply returned to his normal life as a poet.⁴ Ishāq b. Mūsā had been murdered as soon as al-Ma'mūn entered Baghdad.⁵

The Caliph, after overcoming most of the obvious dissensions within the family, seems to have felt secure and confident of his ability to suppress any revolt which might be provoked in the future.⁶ Therefore, he appointed his brother Ishāq, (later al-Mu'taṣim), as governor of the provinces of Shām and Miṣr with full administrative authority, at the same time he nominated his son al-'Abbās

1. Tab., III, 1016; Muruḥ, VII, 60-62.

2. Ibn Khayyāṭ, II, 508 & 509; Yaqubi, 148-50; Azdi, pp. 343 & 352.

3. Ibn Khayyāṭ, II, 512.

4. Tab., III, 1032ff.; Ṭayfūr, Kitāb Baghdad, Cairo, 1368/1949, pp. 11-12, 101; Muruḥ, VII, 63-64; Aghani, XVIII, 43.

5. Ṭayfūr, p. 11; Azdi, p. 352.

6. Muruḥ, VII, 78.

as viceroy of Jazīra, Thughūr and al-ʿAwāṣim.¹

In the matter of the succession, al-Maʿmūn seems to have recognized the error of his predecessors in nominating more than one heir. Therefore, he kept himself aloof from this problem and enjoyed to a certain extent the achievements which his reign had brought to the people. When he fell seriously ill in 218/833 during his campaign against Byzantium, a message was sent to his son al-ʿAbbās, demanding his immediate presence before the Caliph. There was some speculation among army officers who were with the Caliph, that he intended to nominate his son as his successor.² Al-Dinawarī clearly reports that al-Maʿmūn designated his son al-ʿAbbās as an heir apparent before he went on this expedition³ but such an assumption has no trace in other early sources.⁴

In the early sources it is stated that al-Maʿmūn nominated Ishāq b. al-Rashīd as his successor. His policy towards the succession was designed to strengthen the Caliphate as the central institution of government for the Islamic community, but it failed, due to the lack of support from other parties involved. Indeed it made the position of the Caliph even more precarious, because of the antagonism which it provoked.

1. Yaqubi, III, 158; Tab., III, 1100; Kamil, VI, 288.

Al-Maʿmūn openly told Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī in the presence of Ishāq and al-ʿAbbās that they incited him to kill Ibrāhīm. Muruj, VII, 67.

2. Tab., III, 1135-36; Kamil, VI, 302-04; cf. Yaqubi, III, 162.

3. Dinawarī, p. 396.

4. Ibn Khayyāt, II, 514; Tab., III, 1135; Azdi, p. 415.

The proclamation of al-Mu'taṣim (218-227/833-842) as successor created two antagonistic groups within the army, one supporting al-Mu'taṣim and the other al-'Abbās b. al-Ma'mūn. As the former was more powerful, and ultimately victorious, al-'Abbās accused his supporters of being disloyal to his uncle al-Mu'taṣim and declared that he acknowledged him as the legitimate Caliph.¹ Although the troops paid reluctant allegiance to the new Caliph, an active rivalry within the army continued behind the scenes, fomented by the desire of al-'Abbās to be the Caliph instead of al-Mu'taṣim. Once again the problem of succession was to cause trouble and dissent in the Empire, and it was the Caliph himself who bore the chief responsibility. The opposition to al-Mu'taṣim within the army became more evident during the Caliph's campaign on the Byzantine frontier, in 223/837, when a group of army officers attempted to assassinate him and to proclaim al-'Abbās as Caliph. When the plot was discovered, all its members were put to death; al-'Abbās was imprisoned and died shortly after.²

1. Yaqubi, III, 162-63; Tab., 1164; cf. Muruḡ, VII, 103.

2. Tab., III, 1256-65; Muruḡ, VII, 137. Yaqubi, III, 167, does not make any mention of the matter except for the imprisonment of 'Uḡayb. 'Anbasa who was considered by al-Ṭabarī and others to be the leader of the conspirators. Al-Azdī reports that al-'Abbās had proclaimed his right to the Caliphate and the chief of al-Mu'taṣim's guards paid homage to him, and that when the Caliph discovered the plot he poisoned his nephew. Azdi, p. 427.

This conspiracy allowed the Turks to secure their position throughout the Empire and thus become in one way or another the real influence behind the throne. Once the plot was put down, the remaining progeny of al-Ma'mūn, although completely innocent, were given to Ītākh, the famous Turkish general, who put them into jail in the basement of his own house where they all died shortly afterwards.¹ As the power of the Caliph grew less and less, that of the army officers gradually increased, until it was they alone who mattered in the direction of affairs.² It was the dissention among the members of the royal family which led to an increase in the influence of the army on the government affairs, and this reaction was clearly noticed during the last period of al-Mu'taṣim's reign. The 'Abbāsid family was split into two factions,³ one group being supported by the Caliph, his courtiers and his powerful military elements, while the opposing group was encouraged by the Arabs, who were trying to maintain their former power, which was now being eroded by the recruitment of foreigners into the army.⁴

Unlike his predecessors, al-Mu'taṣim did not name his successor, but gave the courtiers a free hand in electing the Caliph and this became their main preoccupation in the

1. Azdi, p. 428; Tab., III, 1267; TBN, fol. 94b; C. Cahen, "The Body Politic", Unity and variety in Muslim Civilization, ed. by G. Von Grunebaum, Chicago, 1967, p. 194.

2. EI², s.v. 'Abbāsids.

3. Tab., III, 1256-65; Muruḥ, VII, 137.

4. Kindi, p. 193.

period which will be treated in this thesis. Al-Mu'tasim's son Muḥammad, (later al-Wāthiq) was chosen as Caliph in 227/892, and in his short reign the power of the influential generals increased proportionately with the decline of that of the Caliphs. Nor was harmony restored within the dynasty itself: al-Wāthiq persecuted even his brother Ja'far (later al-Mutawakkil) for personal reasons.¹ Such an attitude towards al-Mutawakkil might have arisen as a result of al-Wāthiq's suspicions concerning his brother's loyalty to the throne; or he might have feared that the army generals would dismiss him and replace him with his brother instead. In consequence, this attitude of distrust among the 'Abbāsids offered more possibilities to the dignitaries to practise their own freedom for the sake of their interest.

Like his father, al-Wāthiq did not nominate his successor, and al-Ya'qūbī reports that the Caliph refused to do so when it was suggested to him, claiming that God would not approve of his seeking to control the Caliphate after his death.² When al-Wāthiq died, the army officers found another opportunity to demonstrate their power in these matters, and after a short disagreement over al-Wāthiq's son, they approved the selection of al-Mutawakkil in 232/847 as Caliph.³ From this time on the 'Abbāsids did not dare to oppose their courtiers, and the Caliphs were but the

1. Tab., III, 1371. It was stated that al-Mutawakkil was detained in prison for a while. Ibn Kathir, IX, 311.

2. Yaqubi, III, 171.

3. Yaqubi, III, 172; Tab., III, 1368-69; Muruj, VII, 189; Kamil, VII, 22-23; Ibn al-'Amīd, Ta'rīkh, Lālahlī Library, Ms. No. 2002, Istanbul, fol. 91a.

puppets of their generals, who were often able to appoint and depose them at will.¹

Departing from the practice of his father and brother, al-Mutawakkil made the same mistake as the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd by appointing in 235/850 his three sons, Muḥammad (later al-Muntaṣir), 'Abd Allāh (later al-Mu'tazz) and Ibrāhīm al-Mu'ayyad respectively as his successors. He imposed on them obligations similar to those which al-Rashīd had placed on his sons, and assigned to each a part of the Empire.² In 233/848 al-Mutawakkil appointed his son Muḥammad as Governor of Mecca, Medina, Ṭā'if and Yemen.³ It was reported that in 234/849 al-Mutawakkil ordered his subjects to accept the authority (ḥumra) of al-Muntaṣir, and had his name mentioned in the Friday prayers.⁴ This attitude indicates that al-Muntaṣir was highly favoured by his father in the early stage of his reign; but the Caliph and his son gradually became bitter enemies, and al-Mutawakkil favoured his next son 'Abd Allāh.

Al-Mutawakkil was praised for his policy towards the succession because it was assumed that he was seeking to avoid uncertainty in respect to the future.⁵ But it seems that this nomination was one of the causes which contributed to his assassination, because in it lay the seeds of the

1. EI², s.v. 'Abbāsids.

2. Yaqubi, III, 174; Tab., III, 1394-1403; Muruj, VII, 193.

3. Tab., III, 1379.

4. Yaqubi, III, 173.

5. M.S. Miah, The Reign of al-Mutawakkil, Ph.D. Thesis, London University, 1967, p. 56.

conflict between al-Mutawakkil and his son al-Muntaṣir.¹ Due to the pressure from the courtiers and the harems, al-Mutawakkil came to favour his son al-Mu'tazz, as was clearly shown when he sent him as his deputy to visit Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm, the governor of Baghdad, who was seriously ill.² In 240/854 the Caliph further honoured al-Mu'tazz by giving him charge of all the treasure-houses throughout the provinces, and ordering that coins should carry his name.³ However, the coins of this reign which have survived give us an earlier date than does al-Ṭabarī, showing that from 237/851-52 coins bearing al-Mu'tazz name began to appear.⁴ The Caliph seemed inclined more and more towards his son al-Mu'tazz, while creating a wider gulf between himself and al-Muntaṣir. Therefore the conflict between the Caliph and al-Muntaṣir was aggravated because of differences in their personal views especially as regards the Shī'a and the Turkish mercenaries, who thought it would serve their interests to encourage the son to stand against his father.⁵ The divergence in attitude between the Caliph and his son reached its climax in 247/861 and cost the Caliph his life, as will appear in the opening of the next section.

1. B.K. al-Tikriti, The Religious Policy of al-Mutawakkil, M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1969, p. 3.

2. Tab., III, 1403.

3. Tab., III, 1395.

4. M.S. Miah, pp. 56-7.

5. Kamil, VII, 36-7; Al-Arbilī, Khulāṣat al-Dhahab al-Masbūk, Baghdad, 1964, p. 226; Diyārbakrī, al-Khamīs fī Ahwāl Anfas Nafīs, Cairo, A.H. 1283, II, 339.

This brief survey of the internal disagreements of the 'Abbāsid line which arose at the very beginning of the establishment of the dynasty shows clearly how this rivalry among them had developed from individual interests and ambitions among the members of the family; and it was this disunity that was to facilitate the virtual anarchy of the period under consideration in this work. The Caliphs were the real source of this instability, and in their anxiety to secure their own hold on the throne, they were prepared to encourage rivalry among their putative successors and their supporters, playing one off against the other. In consequence of this, each new Caliph who came to the throne was the tool of the parties which had brought him to power, and these were soon the real masters of the Empire. Al-Rashīd seemed to have mastered the situation, but he could not prevent outside influences from stimulating rivalry and antagonism between his sons.

By the time of al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn, the conflict among the members of the royal family came to be considered as a struggle between two ethnic factions, the Arabs on al-Amīn's side and the Persians on al-Ma'mūn's. However, many Arabs, and especially 'Abbāsids, joined al-Ma'mūn on the ground that al-Amīn had been disloyal to his father's testament.

Al-Ma'mūn further complicated this perilous situation by introducing large numbers of foreign slave troops into Iraq, upsetting the precarious balance that had been achieved between the Arabs and the Neo-Muslims. During

the reign of al-Mu'tasim this recruitment of foreigners became very pronounced, and they influenced the affairs of the state. This led to a weakening of the position of the 'Abbāsids and obliged the Caliphs to give some of their privileges to the military leaders.

Al-Mu'tasim's death left a vacuum in the succession, giving the courtiers an opportunity to nominate the person of their choice, thereby lessening the power of their candidate, by the burden of obligation he was recognized as having to them. Al-Wāthiq made the same mistake as his father in not nominating his successor. By the time of al-Mutawakkil the situation was beyond redemption, and it was accepted that only a person enjoying the support of the most powerful generals could hope to become Caliph.

To sum up, the disagreement among the 'Abbāsids goes back to the very establishment of their dynasty, and gradually the Caliphs lost their power through this rivalry which brought into it many self-interested individuals.

CHAPTER III

THE 'ABBĀSĪD FAMILY AND ITS ROLE IN THE STATE (247-256/ 861-870)

The murder of al-Mutawakkil in 247/861 may be seen as a direct consequence of dissension within the 'Abbāsīd family, which allowed the personal prestige of its members to be manipulated for the realisation of the ambitions of rival groups within the capital.¹ Foremost amongst these were the Shī'a who, since the time of al-Ma'mūn, had benefited from the policy of the court and had established themselves as a separate movement in opposition to the 'Abbāsīd family, and they saw the reactionary policies of this Caliph as a threat to all they had gained.² In response to al-Mutawakkil's domination, they encouraged al-Muntaṣir to oppose his father on such contrived issues as the veneration of 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, making him reliant on their support in the inevitable contest over the succession. Al-Mu'tazz, on the other hand, is presented, in one way or another, as sharing the views of his father on such matters, and in addition, his mother, Qabiḥa, is

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1. W.M. Watt, Islamic Political Thought, p. 89, takes the view that al-Mutawakkil's attitude represents a surrender to 'Ulama and the masses who were under their influence. Prof. Watt's view is also shared by von Gruenbaum, Classical Islam, tr. by K. Watson, London, 1970, p. 95.
 2. The discrimination shown by the Caliph against those who had enjoyed the favour and support of his predecessors was described in B.K. al-Tikriti, The Religious Policy of al-Mutawakkil, Chapters, II, IV, V.

said/to have been one of his father's favourite wives.¹ Thus, he was favoured for the succession and became the centre of intrigue for the courtiers and retainers who wished to carry on the policy of the Caliph and to maintain their supremacy. The political tensions created by this polarization of the life of the capital was made the more dangerous by the fact that each of the parties sought, also, to strengthen its position by suborning the Turkish troops in the Caliph's armies, and by mustering private militia.²

Al-Mutawakkil brought the situation to a critical point when, on 28 Ramaḍān 247/5 December 861, probably acting on the advice of 'Ubayd Allāh b. Yahyā and Fath b. Khāqān, he appointed al-Mu'tazz to lead the Friday prayers, publicly depriving al-Muntaṣir of this mark of respect at the last

1. Ibn Nubāta, al-Iktifā' min Ta'rīkh al-Khulafā', Ms. M.M. No. 57, Ta'rīkh, Cairo, fol. 59a; Diyarbakrī, II, 339, says that al-Mutawakkil's hostility to al-Muntaṣir arose from the latter's refusal to abdicate his right to the succession in favour of al-Mu'tazz, and the same reason is advanced by Ibn al-Duqmāq, al-Jawhar al-Thamīn fī Siyar al-Mulūk wa al-Ṣalāṭīn, Ms. Dār al-Kutūb, No. 1522, Ta'rīkh, Cairo, fol. 41b.

2. In the Tanbih, pp. 316-20, al-Mas'ūdī mentions a body of twelve thousand non-Turkish soldiers collected on the orders of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil and put under the leadership of 'Ubayd Allāh b. Yahyā, his secretary, and later his trusted vizier.

minute.¹ The rift between father and son was now out in the open, and sides were seen to be taken by each of the factions in the capital, most notably by the Turkish general Waṣīf who, after having been deprived of his lands, diyā', cast his support in favour of al-Muntaṣir. Many other Turks followed him in this, and we hear of a certain Atāmish, recruiting support for al-Muntaṣir among the troops, and presenting 'Ubayd Allāh and Fath b. Khāqān as their enemies.² Al-Ya'qūbī, refers to this very briefly,³ but al-Mas'ūdī goes into detail to show that al-Muntaṣir was actually soliciting support from disaffected Turkish military leaders.⁴ Rumours of plots by the Caliph and his advisers to have al-Muntaṣir and his supporters assassinated coincided with the latter's decision to murder them.⁵ It was clear that the mystique of the 'Abbāsids had been eroded to the point where they were considered as merely political objects, with no special immunity from the violence of party conflict.

1. Al-Muntaṣir had already suffered many humiliations from his father at the court. Cf. Tab., III, 1457; Miskawayh, VI, p. 555; al-Quḍā'ī, 'Uyūn al-Ma'ārif, Ms. Ahmad Library, No. 2898 Ta'rīkh, Istanbul, fol. 99a; Diyārbakrī, II, 339. The incident of the Friday prayer is reported in Tab., III, 1453 (Kamil, vii, 61), where there is an account of al-Mutawakkil's confusion when Dāwūd b. Muḥammad b. Abī al-'Abbās praised the performance of al-Mu'tazz at the mosque, and declared that in all his long experience he had never heard of anyone more eloquent or accomplished than the prince al-Mu'tazz.

2. Muruḥ, VII, 272.

3. Yaqubi, III, 178.

4. Muruḥ, VII, 272 & 273.

5. Tab., III, 1465, 1472; Kamil, VII, 64.

/ The familiar account of the murder of al-Mutawakkil and his vizier Fath b. Khāqān on the night of 9 Shawwāl 247/ 11 December 861,¹ as given in the sources, dwells on the insults and provocative behaviour of the Caliph towards al-Muntaṣir who was present with him at a drinking party, but this must be seen as an attempt to provide an immediate cause for an action which had already been decided upon.² There were, of course, attempts to exculpate al-Muntaṣir in the matter of his father's murder and present him as an unwilling puppet of the Turks.³ But the evidence given by the primary sources proves the opposite view.⁴ There is even an account that al-Muntaṣir was being encouraged by certain fugahā' to commit this murder because of the disgraceful behaviour of al-Mutawakkil in his private life.⁵ This disregard for the security of the person of the Caliph, even among members of his immediate family, marked the

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1. Tab., III, 1465; Muruj, VII, 267; Al-Ṭabarī gives in another account the date of his death as the 5 Shawwāl 247. Tab., III, 1471.
 2. Tab., III, 1457, 1462, Kamil, VII, 64-65. The assassins of the Caliph were the Turks Bāghir and Baghlūn, and they are said to have been assisted by Mūsā b. Bughā and Hārūn b. Sawartakīn. Cf. Yaqubi, III, 178-79; Muruj, VII, 268-271; Dhahabi, Tarikh, XIII, 82b; Sibṭ, IX, 250a; Goldziher, Muslim Studies, tr. C.R. Barber and S.M. Stern, London 1967, I, 140.
 3. Von Gruenbaum, Classical Islam, p. 98; R. Levy, Social Structure of Islam, Cambridge University Press, 1965, p. 419; M.S. Miah, p. 103.
 4. Ibn al-ʿIbrī believes that al-Muntaṣir was the one who conspired secretly with certain slaves among the Turks and murdered his father. Ibn al-ʿIbrī, I, 145.
 5. Tab., III, 1499; Miskawayh, VI, 561.

beginning of the decline of the office as a politico-religious institution, and the fact that it survived at all is to be explained by the need for some visible centre of authority which would symbolize the continuity of a state which had lost most of its unity. Questions of nominations to the succession could no longer arise, for it was the will of the strongest military power that would henceforth determine who should occupy this office; and thus, the very idea of dynastic succession was lost, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

On the night of the Caliph's murder homage was paid to the new Caliph al-Muntaṣir,¹ who immediately appointed a supreme committee under his own leadership. The committee suggested sending Sa'īd al-Kabīr to summon al-Mu'ayyad, and Sa'īd al-Ṣaghīr to fetch al-Mu'tazz.² Sa'īd al-Ṣaghīr related that after he had informed al-Mu'tazz's guard about the murder of al-Mutawakkil and was brought into the presence of the Prince, the latter asked him, "O Sa'īd, what news do you bring." Sa'īd repeated the story of al-Mutawakkil's murder and asked al-Mu'tazz to return with him so

1. It is said that, after the murder of the Caliph, Ja'far b. Sulaymān al-Hāshimī came to al-Muntaṣir in order to offer allegiance. Al-Muntaṣir, pretending to be unaware of what had happened, asked, "How about my father, the Commander of the Faithful, al-Mutawakkil 'alā Allāh?" The chief Qāqī replied that he had been murdered by Fath b. Khāqān. Then al-Muntaṣir asked what had happened to Fath, and was told that he had been murdered by Bughā. Homage was then paid to al-Muntaṣir by the chief Qāqī, the vizier and the retainers. Dhahabi, *Tarikh*, XIII, 82a.

2. Tab., III, 1473; Ibn Nubāta, II, 117b.

that he might be the first to pay homage and thus win the heart of his brother. Al-Mu'tazz said that he would go in the morning, but Sa'id, assisted by the prince's eunuch, continued trying to persuade him, until it was time for morning prayers. Then, after performing the prayer, Sa'id al-Saghīr and al-Mu'tazz went to the palace and were received by al-Muntaṣir, who drew his brother to his side, embraced him, expressed his sympathy and received the oath of allegiance from him. Shortly after, al-Mu'ayyad arrived with Sa'id al-Kabīr and al-Muntaṣir did likewise with him.¹ There is an account which indicates that al-Mu'tazz was reluctant to pay homage to his brother whom he considered a usurper of his own rights, but Bughā al-Sharābī, another Turkish general, told him, "Your brother has already killed your father and I am afraid that he will murder you, too; so it is better to pay him homage." At this al-Mu'tazz changed his mind and paid homage to the newly appointed Caliph.²

On the same night, the supporters of Prince al-Mu'tazz, collected together by the vizier 'Ubayd Allāh b. Yaḥyā b. Khāqān,³ proposed to kill al-Muntaṣir and proclaim al-Mu'tazz

1. Tab., III, 1473-75; Kamil, VII, 67-9; Ibn Nubāta, II, 117b-118a; cf. Ibn Kathīr, X, 350, who states that al-Mu'tazz paid homage the morning after the murder, after the new Caliph had received the oath of allegiance from the dignitaries in the dār al-'āmma. Moreover, Ibn Kathīr mentions that al-Mu'tazz was the real successor to his father, but that he paid homage to his brother under coercion.

2. TDA, fol. 53b.

3. TBN, fol. 63a. Al-Ṭabarī mentions that 'Ubayd Allāh appeared the next morning to take the oath, and then went away. Tab., III, 1471.

Caliph instead. But when 'Ubayd Allāh learned that al-Mu'tazz was already in the custody of al-Muntaṣir's supporters, and had been forced to render the oath of allegiance, he told his followers that it was no use their fighting, since al-Mu'tazz had already surrendered to the conspirators.¹

Despite the troubled state of the capital, on the morning after the drama of al-Mutawakkil's death the oath of allegiance was sworn to al-Muntaṣir.² The text of this oath is preserved in al-Ṭabarī, and it sheds light on the relations between the two brothers, i.e. al-Muntaṣir and al-Mu'tazz. There is no indication about whom the Caliphate should be transferred to after his death, for according to al-Mutawakkil's earlier disposition it would fall to al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad respectively, while the allegiance was made solely to the Caliph al-Muntaṣir. The document begins by stressing the seriousness of the oath,³ demanding from those who swore it that they obey, accept direction, remain faithful, have no doubts about him nor deceive him, neither turn aside from him nor be irresolute. Their duty was to listen, to obey, to follow, to support, and to be ready to do all that al-Muntaṣir commanded. They were to be friends to the Caliph's friends and enemies to his enemies, both publicly and privately, at home and abroad. And they had to keep their oath of allegiance in faithfulness to the

1. Tab., III, 1463.

2. Tab., III, 1471-72.

3. Tab., III, 1475-78.

contract and in fulfilment of the covenant.

Moreover, the oath asserts the importance of this commitment, and those who witnessed it must not mar it through suspicion, treason, deception or by giving it a new interpretation, so that they may come before Allāh, having been true to His bond, having secured His justice upon His people, without violating the oath. It is made clear that those who took the oath to the Commander of Faithful, also swore it before Allāh. The hand of Allāh was above their hands; whoever broke it, forfeited his own life, but whoever observed it faithfully would receive a great reward.

The Caliph, fearing that his brothers might act against him during his reign, was insistent on the sanctity of this oath; no one who swore it should allow himself to be led astray by envy or desire, nor should any temptation lure him from the right path. Life and effort must be concentrated on this commitment; Allāh would accept nothing less than a total adherence to this oath. Violation of any of its provisions would lead to the confiscation and distribution among the poor of all the property of anyone found guilty.

Feeling insecure in his new office, al-Muntaṣir was at pains to emphasise the moral obligations incumbent on his subjects to respect the dignity of the Caliphate, and this is the first instance met with in the historians of an oath of allegiance described in such detail. The allusions

to religion were intended to impress on all people the sinful consequences of disloyalty or dissent, for Allāh was a witness to what was in their minds. What effect this was expected to have on the men at the centre of power, who had shown they would go to any extremes of violence or deceit to preserve their own interests, cannot be estimated. But it is interesting to meet with an appeal to religious standards as a final guarantee when all else had proved ineffective.

Shortly after al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad had taken the oath of allegiance to their brother, they reluctantly accepted as an inheritance from their father's estate a sum estimated at ten million dirhams.¹ Al-Ṭabarī speaks of the harmony which marked the relations between the brothers during the early days of the Caliphate of al-Muntaṣir, who respected them highly and, in particular, showed much sympathy towards al-Mu'ayyad.² The Caliph, however, feared his uncle 'Alī b. al-Mu'taṣim and expelled him from Samarra to Baghdad where he was kept under observation,³ indicating the suspicion and antagonism which persisted among the members of the family no matter how critical the situation the Caliphate was facing.⁴ The impression given by al-Ṭabarī

1. Muntazam, XI, 146b; Ibn Nubāta, II, 117a; Dhahabi, Tarikh, XIII, 82b.

2. Tab., III, 1486; al-'Aynī, 'Iqd al-Jumān fī Ta'rīkh Ahl al-Zamān, Ms. Dār al-Kutub, No. 1584 Ta'rīkh, Cairo, XVII, part II, 244a.

3. Tab., III, 1479; Muntazam, XI, 147a; Ibn Kathir, X, 352.

4. There is one account which states that Abū Aḥmad b. al-Mutawakkil (later al-Muwaffaq) was detained for a while by the Caliph's order because he killed Baghlūn, one of al-Mutawakkil's murderers. TDA, fol. 53b.

of family harmony should be judged in the light of the continuous rivalry amongst its members which, more than any other factor, led to the degradation of the Caliphate. Indeed, certain later sources state that al-Mu'tazz used to abuse his brother publicly during the reign of their father.¹ On the other hand, the apparent friendship which the Caliph showed towards his brothers might be interpreted as arising from a desire to avoid any possible disturbance from their side, by keeping them in close contact with his court. The following events support the probability of this hypothesis.

In 248/862, al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad were forced to renounce their right to the succession. The story of their abdication runs that when the brothers were summoned to the jawsaq (the palace of the Caliph), al-Mu'tazz asked al-Mu'ayyad, "Brother, why do you think he has asked us to come here?" He replied, "To abdicate our claim to the throne, of course!" Al-Mu'tazz said, "I cannot imagine that he would do that to us."² While they were speculating thus, a messenger came in carrying the order of abdication from the Caliph. Al-Mu'ayyad immediately submitted, but al-Mu'tazz refused to do so. He was then tortured by the guards until he agreed to comply. Al-Mu'ayyad scolded his brother for trying to hold out: "O you child, you have seen what has happened to your father at their hands, despite all his

1. Al-Arbilī p. 226; Kāzirūnī, Mukhtaṣar al-Ta'rīkh,

Ms. Jār Allāh library, No. 1625, Istanbul, fol. 53b.

2. Tab., III, 1486; Kamil, VII, 73; Muntazam, XII, 1b.

power; and you are trying to reject their demand!"¹

This incident shows that al-Mu'tazz was the more serious of the two. Moreover, al-Muntaṣir seemed to remain aloof from what happened to his brothers, and it was assumed that he adopted this policy under the influence of his vizier Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb, who had won over a number of Turkish generals to the support of al-Muntaṣir's son 'Abd al-Waḥḥāb, as successor to the Caliphate.²

The Caliph appeared to his brothers, powerless to initiate any activity, and all affairs were in the hands of the courtiers, to whose wishes he had to yield in order to maintain himself in office. When he summoned his brothers to the palace, he apologised for the action he had taken, and pretended that it was for the sake of their own safety that he had forced them to renounce their right to the succession. His words were: "Do you believe that I have made you abdicate because I wanted to live long enough to see my son of an age when he could be made to swear the oath? By Allāh, I have never for a moment wished such a thing! I prefer that the sons of my father become Caliph after me rather than some cousin or other. But these here," he pointed toward the mawālī who were standing or sitting there - "have tormented me over your abdication and I was afraid that, if I did not do it, one of them might make an attempt upon your lives. What do you think? Could I do such a thing? Kill the assassin? By Allāh, all their

1. Tab., III, 1487; Kamil, VII, 73; Muntazam, XII, 2a.

2. Tab., III, 1485-86; cf. Ibn al-'Ibrī, I, 145.

blood is not worth the blood of one of you! Therefore I have given in to their wishes; it is the lesser evil!"

The two princes, on hearing this, bowed and kissed his hands; he pressed them to him. Then they left the palace.¹

In his concern for his brothers' safety the Caliph seemed quite sincere, and it was important that he should convince them of this. The very fact that he should make his inability to control his courtiers an excuse for this action shows to what extent the authority of the Caliphate had been debased; he no longer expected to be regarded as in command of affairs. Despite what the Caliph had pretended in the presence of his brothers, it was suggested by early historians that al-Muntaṣir was actually the driving force behind this abdication, and that he even threatened his brothers with death if they refused to comply.² Furthermore, he forced his brothers to sign their own abdication in accordance with his own desire to nominate his son, 'Abd al-Wahhāb, whom the Turks, also, were tentatively considering as a successor to his father.³

1. Tab., III, 1488; Miskawayh, VI, p. 560.

2. Tab., III, 1486.

3. Ibn al-'Amīd, fol. 96b; al-Kutubī, 'Uyūn al-Tawārīkh, Ms. al-Maktaba al-Zāhiriyya, No. 47 Ta'rīkh, VI, Damascus, 170b; Ibn Kathir, X, 353. But Ibn al-'Ibrī believes that the main object of al-Muntaṣir was to secure his Caliphate by forcing his brothers to abdicate their right to succession. He threatened them with death if they did not resign their claim so that he could nominate his son instead. Ibn al-'Ibrī, I, 145.

Despite the fact that al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad had abdicated their rights to succession, the Caliph still did not feel secure and was encouraged by his companions to make it official. Therefore, his brothers were summoned again and advised to write down in their own hand that they themselves relinquished the oath of allegiance that had been sworn to them, and released all who had taken it from its obligations. The document is preserved in al-Ṭabarī and reads: "In the name of Allāh the Merciful and the Compassionate: The Commander of the Faithful, al-Mutawakkil 'alā Allāh vested me with this office and had me swear the oath while I was still a small child, without my desire or consent. However, having come to understand my situation, I realize that I am not competent to hold the office with which he invested me, and that I am not suitable for the Caliphate of the Muslims. Whoever has taken the oath of allegiance to me is permitted to break it: I have absolved you from it and freed you from your oath."¹ Al-Muntaṣir sent a message to the governors of the provinces concerning the matter and publicized the statements of abdication so that they should be known to all his subjects.

1. Tab., III, 1489; Anwar G. Cheyne, p. 130. The statements were read in front of the leaders of the people, the Turks, the nobles, the officers, the Qāḍī al-Quḍāt, the Qāḍīs, the generals, the Hāshimites, the leaders of the dīwān, the body of attendants, the colonels of the bodyguards. Also present were Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir, Waṣīf, Bughā al-Kabīr, Bughā al-Ṣaghīr and all who were attending the dār al-'amma, and the dār al-khāṣṣa. Tab., III, 1488-89.

Even if al-Muntaṣir had wished to favour his brothers, his situation left him powerless to do anything about it.¹ It is interesting here to note that al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad seem to have been without substantial support in their conflict with their brother, while al-Muntaṣir appeared to have had all the powerful dignitaries behind him. This is significantly different from what had taken place in previous reigns, when the potential successor always appeared to have most of the powerful elements on his side. It is probable that these princes may have had some following, but their supporters were not strong enough to declare themselves and challenge the supremacy of the actual directors of the Empire. The brothers' presence at the court, and the fact that they were closely watched by the Caliph's sympathizers would have prevented any outside supporters from contacting them. Thus the Caliph shielded the court from any possible disturbances which might have threatened his position.

The sudden death of the Caliph in 248/862 offered an opportunity for the dignitaries, and especially the Turks, to choose the person whom they preferred for the Caliphate. The Caliph and his family had no say in the nomination of a successor because all the power of the state was now in the hands of the leading army officers.² In the end, these powers behind the throne decided on Ahmad b. Muḥammad

1. It has been suggested that al-Muntaṣir made a vain attempt to secure the Caliphate for himself, by forcing his brothers to waive their claim. C. Brockelmann, p. 133.

2. W.M. Watt; What is Islam?, London, 1968, p. 122.

b. al-Mu'tasim, (later al-Musta'in) as Caliph instead of their first candidate, Ahmad b. al-Mu'tasim.¹ It is surprising that the leading officers did not appoint 'Abd al-Wahhāb whom they had favoured during the reign of his father, and it can be assumed from the silence of the sources on this point that there had been some shift in the balance of the forces² that were conspiring for power and that this resulted in a compromise candidate being chosen; the political alignments had become so fluid that contemporary observers were afraid to commit themselves.

Thus the divergence of ambition among the members of the royal family, noticeable since its early establishment, finally led to this unfortunate situation in the Caliphate and later produced such tragic ends for the Caliphs themselves. All of which goes to confirm the assumption that the murder of al-Mutawakkil may be taken as a turning point in the history of the dynasty, because after his death the real power of the state fell into the hands of certain army generals who were supported by a few self-seeking officers. The Caliph, however, was used to fulfil the officers' ambitions and the only thing that remained for him was the religious function which the leading officers did not dare to usurp.

The new Caliph, al-Musta'in, chosen on 10 Rabī' 11 248/ 7 August 862, left to those who had elected him full freedom

1. Tab., III, 1501-1503.

2. Al-Ṣafadī, al-Wāfī bi al-Wafayāt, Istanbul, 1949, II, 249.

of action while he devoted himself to pleasure, paying no attention to governmental affairs.¹ The financial security of al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad was attacked, and on Jumāda I 248/July 862, al-Musta'in forced them to sell to him all the property they owned, except for a small portion on which they could hardly maintain themselves.² Shortly after, on 12 Ramadān 248/2 November 862, the Caliph again compulsorily purchased all the buildings, houses, estates, palaces, furniture, and such like, which they possessed to the value of twenty thousand dinars. This deal was notarized and signed by the witnesses, notaries, Qaḍīs and others.³ It was said that al-Musta'in went even further and forced them to sell their village holdings, leaving al-Mu'tazz with a yearly income of about twenty thousand dinars in cash and al-Mu'ayyad an income of five hundred dinars. It was estimated that the real value of the property purchased from al-Mu'tazz was ten million dinars and ten standard measures of pearls, and that of al-Mu'ayyad three million dirhams and three measures of pearls.⁴

In seeking to undermine the financial security of his potential rivals within the royal family the Caliph introduced a new phenomenon into the history of the dynasty. Although al-Mutawakkil suffered from economic problems during the reign of his brother al-Wāthiq,⁵ the circumstances

1. Tab., III, 1508; al-Qudā'ī, fol. 106b.

2. Tab., III, 1507.

3. Tab., III, 1507.

4. Tab., III, 1507.

5. Tab., III, 1371-72.

were entirely different. Al-Mutawakkil was only deprived of his regular pension, while al-Mu'ayyad and al-Mu'tazz were forced to sell their own property.¹ After buying their considerable possessions, al-Musta'in confined al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad to a small room (hujra) of the jawsaq, under the supervision of their arch-enemy, Bughā al-Ṣaghīr.² At the very beginning of his reign his supporters were said to be planning the murder of al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad because of a riot which took place in the capital, but the vizier, advised by the Caliph, convinced them that the princes were not behind the troubles. He recommended, instead, that the two brothers be placed in prison. However, it seems more probable that the two were placed in confinement as soon as al-Musta'in assumed the Caliphate, and that the expropriation of their property was subsequent to this. Moreover, the Caliph decided on this plan in order to avoid the anticipated disturbance from his family on the one hand, and on the other hand to keep the leading officers to whom he owed his Caliphate on his side. Thus the circumstances of the two brothers during this reign went from bad to worse.³

In the following year, 249/863, al-Musta'in granted the administration of Mecca, Medina, Baṣra and Kūfa to his son

1. Nujum, II, 327; Ibn Nubāta, II, 121a.

2. Tab., III, 1502; Muntazam, XII, 3a; Miskawayh, VI, 564; cf. EI², s.v. Bughā al-Ṣaghīr.

3. N. Abbott, "Arabic papyri of the reign of Ḡa'far al-Mutawakkil" ZDMG, XCII, 1938, p. 92.

al-‘Abbās, whom he, also, wished to have nominated as his successor. However, we are informed by Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī that the Caliph deferred acting on the latter issue, apparently because of his son's youth.¹ No doubt, there was a faction among the Caliph's supporters who wished to have al-‘Abbās assured of the succession, just as there were those who favoured some other candidate; the Caliph's freedom of action in these matters could no longer be said to exist.² A poem written at this time reads:

God has charged you to watch over his religion and
to keep his people from the slippery path where
others have perished

Appoint your son ‘Abbās as your successor - for he
is worthy of it -

and issue letters to spread this allegiance among
your subjects.

Although in years he is immature, he is mature in
intellect;

and as a guide he would lead as capably as an elder.

In earlier times, John was only a lad when he
received his Holy Wisdom,

and Jesus preached in his cradle.³

Neither the Caliph nor his office retained any respect among his subjects. Naked power was the patent of authority, and the ‘Abbāsid family was as much its victim as its benefactor.⁴

In the year 251/865, a conspiracy amongst the Turks against al-Musta‘īn and his supporters, Waṣīf and Bughā

1. Sibṭ, IX, 266a; where this event is included among those of the year 250; cf. Muruḥ, VII, 346-47.

2. W.M. Watt, What Is Islam?, p. 122.

3. Muruḥ, VII, 346-47.

4. Ibn Dihya, al-Nibrās fī Ta’rīkh Khulafā’ Banī al-‘Abbās, Baghdad, 1365/1965, p. 86.

al-Ṣaghīr, was uncovered; and although its ring leader, Bāghir al-Turkī, was murdered, the situation in Samarra seemed so precarious that the three fled to Baghdad, leaving the capital of the Empire without a responsible leader. Later historians ascribe the source of this unrest to the activity of al-Mu'tazz himself,¹ though in fact it is difficult to conceive of him, either, as an independent agent in the civil disturbances which followed. In certain respects this was a struggle between Baghdad and Samarra;² the former, anxious to retain its earlier pre-eminence in the Empire, was seeking the presence of a Caliph as the visible sign of capital status. Al-Musta'īn took with him to Baghdad his cousin Muḥammad b. al-Wāthiq, and al-Mas'ūdī assumes from this that the Caliph was more concerned about his activities than those of al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad who were left in prison in Samarra.³

When al-Musta'īn, despite the insistent pleading of the leading officers, refused to return to Samarra⁴ they released al-Mu'tazz and his brother from prison and declared the former Caliph, with al-Mu'ayyad designated as his successor.⁵ For the first time, two Caliphs were recognized in the Empire, and this must be taken as symbolic of the

1. Muntazam, XII, 16a; Burhān al-Kamāl wa Kamāl al-Burhān, (anonymous) Ms. No. 85 Ta'rīkh, M.M., Cairo, fol. 171b; cf. Tab., III, 1523.

2. Tab., III, 1542; Muruj, VII, 365.

3. Muruj, VII, 364-65.

4. Tab., III, 1545; Baghdad, II, 122; Ibn al-Kathīr claims that al-Mu'tazz was the one who released al-Mu'ayyad from prison. Ibn Kathir, XI, 7.

5. Tab., III, 1545-48; Muruj, VII, 365; Miskawayh, VI, 579.

polarization of the disorganized elements of the society and of the 'Abbāsid family itself. Abū Aḥmad b. al-Rashīd, a senior member of the family, refused to take the oath of allegiance to the new Caliph, because the latter had earlier renounced his position of his own free will, saying that he had not sought the honour in the first place. Al-Mu'tazz replied: "I was forced to do so under the threat of the sword." To which Abū Aḥmad responded, "We did not know that you had been forced into it, and we took the oath to that man (al-Musta'īn). Do you now wish us to be separated from our wives and to forfeit our possessions (the penalty for breaking the oath of submission)? Leave me in peace until the people have agreed among themselves, otherwise - take this sword (and kill me)". Al-Mu'tazz did not insist, and Abū Aḥmad was allowed to leave without taking the oath.¹

In the civil war that ensued, the troops from Samarra were placed under the command of Abū Aḥmad (later, al-Muwaffaq), the half brother of al-Mu'tazz, who led them against Baghdad.² Each side sought to win over the elements supporting the other: al-Musta'īn wrote to the Turks of Samarra, reminding them of the oath of allegiance they had taken to him, while al-Mu'tazz wrote to the military governor of Baghdad, Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir, pointing out that it was he who had been designated for the Caliphate according to al-Mutawakkil's disposition. Each side, too,

1. Tab., III, 1549.

2. Tab., III, 1555; Muruḥ, VII, 366; Miskawayh, VII, 579, Muntazam, XII, 17b.

made efforts to win over the uncommitted troops stationed in Syria and other provinces of the Empire.¹ A compromise, whereby al-Musta'īn would remain Caliph with al-Mu'tazz as his designated successor, was proposed, but it came to nothing. Other secret negotiations took place between the two opposing groups, as a result of which al-Musta'īn lost the support of the leading dignitaries, including the influential Muḥammad b. Tāhir, and was forced to abdicate.² Under the terms of the settlement, in which al-Muwaffaq acted as agent for al-Mu'tazz, al-Musta'īn was obliged to live with his family in Medina, with freedom of movement only between there and Mecca. He would, also, receive the revenues of a certain unspecified area. Al-Musta'īn, for his part, refused to go to Samarra to take the oath of allegiance, nor would he do so until al-Mu'tazz had signed the contract agreed upon.³

This distrust among the members of the 'Abbāsīd family was also demonstrated when the mother and daughter of al-Musta'īn were searched by the soldiers of al-Mu'tazz before being allowed to visit him in Baghdad.⁴ The agents of al-Mu'tazz wanted to achieve the greatest publicity for al-

1. Tab., III, 1552-1554; Kamil, VII, 94; Ibn Kathir, XI, 7; cf. Ibar, III, 287-90.

2. Tab., III, 1632-34; cf. Yaqubi, III, 180. The 'Abbāsīds in Baghdad bitterly criticized al-Musta'īn for the shortage of food, and they accused Muḥammad b. Tāhir of deceit in his negotiations with Samarra. Tab., III, 1616; cf. Ibar, III, 289.

3. Tab., III, 1641-42; Muruj, VII, 366-67; Kamil, VII, 108; cf. Yaqubi, III, 180.

4. Tab., III, 1643.

Musta'īn's renunciation of the Caliphate and his professions of loyalty to his cousin; therefore on 4 Muharram 252/26 January 866 they brought him to the palace of Ibn Tāhir for the ceremony.¹ The effect of these events on the prestige of the dynasty is shown in the following verses which were current at the time:

The Caliph Aḥmad b. Muḥammad (al-Musta'īn) has been deposed, and his successor will be either killed or banished.

The authority of his family (banū abīhī) will vanish, and no-one will ever again be happy in the Caliphate. O Banū al-'Abbās, easy indeed was the path by which you achieved domination over your slaves.

You fashioned your world in elegance, but (the garment of) life has been on you, never to be repaired.²

Having made public the announcement of his abdication, al-Musta'īn was not allowed to go to Mecca as agreed. He stayed for a while in the house of Ḥasan b. Ṣāliḥ near Baghdad, while he was deciding where he would take up residence. At one point he expressed a wish to move to Baṣra, and when asked why he chose such an unhealthy place, he replied, "Could Baṣra be any more distasteful than the abdication of the Caliphate?"³ Later, he was compelled to move to Wāsiṭ.⁴

Al-Mu'tazz, on ascending the throne in 251/865, rewarded his brothers al-Mu'ayyad and al-Muwaffaq, and sought their support, during the critical situation in which the Caliphate now found itself. In accordance with al-

1. Tab., III, 1645; Muruḥ, 367; Damirī, Ḥayāt al-Ḥaywān, Cairo, 1284 A.H., I, 108.

2. Tab., III, 1648; Shadarat, II, 124-125; Kamil, VII, 122.

3. Tab., III, 1647; Ibn Kathir, XI, 10; cf. Ibn Diḥya, p. 86.

4. Tab., III, 1647; Ibn al-Sā'ī, Kitāb Mukhtasar Akhbār al-Khulafā', Bulaq, 1309 A.H., p. 68.

Mutawakkil's testament, he designated al-Mu'ayyad as his successor,¹ but the old suspicion and distrust among the members of the family persisted, and he was soon to be worried by his brother's association with some of the generals.² In Rajab 252/June 866, al-Mu'tazz removed al-Mu'ayyad from the line of succession on the grounds that he was conspiring against him,³ also depriving him of the revenues of the district of Arminiyya which he had been promised. When the pro-Mu'ayyad faction protested against the Caliph's action, al-Mu'tazz responded by imprisoning both him and his brother, al-Muwaffaq.⁴ On Friday, 7 Rajab 252/27 June 866, al-Mu'ayyad wrote a letter renouncing his claim to the throne, but even this was not sufficient to allay the fears of al-Mu'tazz. Finally, on 21 Rajab/9 July he had him murdered in prison, on the pretext that there was a plot being formed to rescue him. On the same day his body was displayed to reliable witnesses in order to show that it bore no marks of ill-treatment, the intention being to create the impression that he died of natural causes.⁵

1. Tab., III, 1545, and Baghdad, II, 122, both include Ahmad al-Mu'tamid as second in line of succession, while Ibn Kathir, XI, 7, does not give any indication that a successor was designated.
2. Al-Tabarī indicates that there was some contact between al-Mu'ayyad and Waṣīf through Waṣīf's sister. Tab., III, 1659.
3. Tab., III, 1668-69; Muruj, VII, 393; Kamil, VII, 115-16; Baghdad, VI, 50.
4. Tab., III, 1669; Muruj, VII, 393; Ibn Kathir, XI, 11; Ibar, III, 291; cf. Nujum, II, 335; TDA, fol. 60a.
5. Tab., III, 1669; Muruj, VII, 393-94; Kamil, VII, 115-16; Ibar, III, 291. Al-Tabarī states that it was said that al-Mu'ayyad had been smothered in furs, but another account holds that he was frozen to death on blocks of ice.

Thus, having succeeded in this, the supporters of al-Mu'tazz turned their attention towards al-Musta'in, who was a potential danger to the throne so long as he remained alive.¹ Orders were sent to Wāsiṭ where he was being detained, that he be murdered and without the details of the event being disclosed, al-Musta'in was eventually murdered while being brought to Samarra in Shawwāl 252/October-November 866.²

Al-Muwaffaq was banished to Wāsiṭ in 253/867, and later moved from there to Baṣra. Some time afterwards riots broke out in the latter city so that he was brought back to Baghdad, and settled in one of the palaces. In this same year 'Alī b. al-Mu'taṣim was sent to live in Wāsiṭ, and later in Baghdad.³ It has been suggested that these two were not regarded as a threat to al-Mu'tazz, who may have been intending to return to the policy of his father, al-Mutawakkil.⁴ But whatever his motives, his behaviour towards

1. Ibn Diḥya, pp. 86-87; cf. Nujum, II, 335-36.

2. When the head of al-Musta'in was brought to the court, al-Mu'tazz was playing chess and he did not bother to raise his eyes to look at it. Tab., III, 1672; Shadharat, II, 126; Ibar, III, 291.

3. Tab., III, 1693; cf. Ibn Ḥammād, Qūt al-Arwāḥ, As'ad library, Ms. no. 7202. Istanbul, fols. 71b-72a; Nujum, II, 335. Yaqubi, III, 187, referring to the case of al-Muhtadī, says that he was sent to Baghdad for his own safety, but later historians are agreed that his presence in Samarra was regarded a danger to the Caliphate and it was for this reason that he was banished from the city. Cf. Sibṭ, IX, 290a; al-Bayhaqī, al-Mahāsīn wa al-Masāwī', Cairo, n.d., II, 343-44. Al-Mas'ūdī, (Muruj, VII, 398) clearly states that al-Muhtadī was expelled to Baghdad and put in prison. Cf. Muruj, VIII, 3, where he is in error when he mentions that al-Muhtadī was sent to al-Shām.

4. D. Sourdel, "La Politique Religieuse des successeurs d'al-Mutawakkil," SI, XIII, 1960, p.12.

his brothers and other relatives destroyed whatever respect and devotion the family had previously commanded, and the Caliph was seen to be as culpable as any of the members of his family in the struggle for power.¹ In 245/867, al-Mu'tazz actually sent all his kinsmen living in Samarra, including the descendants of former Caliphs, to take up residence in Baghdad, fearing that certain of his officers might be tempted to use one of them to replace him on the throne.² And the financial condition of the state, indeed, gave cause for worry, as there was no money available to pay the soldiers.³ On 27 Rajab 255/11 June 869, al-Mu'tazz was deposed by the Turkish officers, and after five days of brutal treatment he died.⁴ The document of abdication which he was forced to sign reads:

"This is what the witnesses attest, and it is in this testament. They confirm that: Abū Allāh, the son of the Commander of the Faithful, al-Mutawakkil 'alā Allāh, has made known to them and called them to witness that, being of sound mind and in full possession of his faculties, of his own free will and without compulsion, he has considered the matter of the Caliphate and the leadership in the affairs of the Muslims, with which office he was invested, and he has decided that he is unsuited to and incapable of this responsibility. He renounces the burden of all duties laid upon him and wishes to be freed from his obligations; and he also releases everyone who was bound to him by the oath of allegiance...He himself calls witnesses to all that is written in this statement; and he reveals to all these witnesses who are mentioned below, and to each of these present after the notification has been read out aloud to him word for word, that he understands all that is written herein and this is done freely and without coercion.

1. Yaqubi, III, 186-187.

2. Bayhaqī, II, 344; Sibṭ, IX, 290a.

3. Tab., III, 1685; Kamil, VII, 132; Ibar, III, 796-97.

4. Yaqubi, III, 186-187; Tab., III, 1709; Sibṭ, IX, 289b; Kamil, III, 133.

/ And it is written on Monday when 3 days were left of Rajab in the year 255."¹

The brutality inflicted on al-Mu'tazz exceeded anything that had gone before, and it should have been with deep misgivings that al-Muhtadī ascended the throne as his successor, accepting the oath of allegiance on the last day of Rajab 255/13 July 864.² Yet, al-Muhtadī seems to have been himself responsible in inspiring the coup, and even al-Mu'tazz showed himself to be aware of his intrigues. It is reported that the Caliph said to al-Muhtadī on the eve of his deposition³ "There is no welcome for those faces which have never appeared in the light", meaning that al-Muhtadī was plotting "in the dark" or behind the scenes against the Caliph al-Mu'tazz. On the other hand, al-Muhtadī showed his contempt for al-Mu'tazz by refusing to use his proper name, on several occasions, referring to him insultingly as Ibn Qabiḥa.⁴

Al-Muhtadī's stratagem to surmount the anarchy and chaos in the Capital was dependent on winning the support of the religious dignitaries, as well as that of their followers, and this he sought to do by emphasizing the sacred nature of the Caliph and pretending a disdain of worldly affairs.⁵

1. Tab., III, 1712-1713.

2. Yaqubi, III, 187; Tab., III, 1707.

3. Sibṭ, IX, 290a; al-'Aynī writes that al-Muhtadī was in collusion with other elements of the army to kill his cousin and assume the Caliphate, adding that he could have saved his cousin's life but, out of worldly ambition, he did not do so. The author denies the piety of the caliph on the grounds of his misconduct with al-Mu'tazz. Al-'Aynī XVII, part 2, fol. 335 a; cf. Bayhaqī, II, 340.

4. Tab., III, 1793, 1795.

5. Yaqubi, III, 187.

Von Kremer sees in this the beginning of a new concept of rule in the state, with a sharp division between the secular and religious institutions.¹ At the same time, al-Muhtadī was careful to eliminate potential rivals to his power within the 'Abbāsīd family, and on certain charges of misconduct, which some of the sources specify, he had Ahmad b. al-Mutawakkil (later al-Mu'tamid) thrown into prison.² Probably the reason for this action was Ahmad's popularity with the army; and indeed it was he whom they selected as the successor to al-Muhtadī the following year.³ Other senior members of the 'Abbāsīd family are said to have been expelled from Samarra to Mecca.⁴ On the other hand the less potentially dangerous members of the royal family were accorded a totally different treatment; these al-Muhtadī sought to propitiate for the common purpose of restoring the dignity and respect of the Caliphate.⁵ But the situation

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1. A. Von Kremer, The Orient Under the Caliphs, tr. into English by Khuda Bukhsh, Calcutta, 1920, p. 296.
 2. Tab., III, 1788; cf. Muruj, VIII, 6; Kamil, VII, 149; Ibn Kathir, XI, 21, where they do not mention the name of Ahmad b. al-Mutawakkil. They clearly state that al-Muhtadī was dealing with the tyrannical actions which had been practised before his ascent to power.
 3. Tab., III, 1818-19 & 1831; Kamil, VII, 162; Ibn Kathir, XI, 23.
 4. As soon as al-Muhtadī ascended the throne he banished Qibīḥa, 'Abd Allāh b. al-Mu'tazz, Ismā'īl b. al-Mutawakkil, Ṭalḥa b. al-Mutawakkil, and 'Abd al-Wahhāb b. al-Muntaṣir to Mecca. When al-Mu'tamid ascended the throne they were allowed to return to Samarra. Muruj, VIII, 41. Ibn Sa'īd states that al-Mu'tamid had al-Muwaffaq brought from Mecca where he had been exiled by al-Muhtadī. Ibn Sa'īd, al-Mughrib, fī ḥula al-Maghrib, Cairo, 1953, I, 86.
 5. Cf. his treatment of Ṣāliḥ b. Ya'qūb b. Abū Ja'far al-Mansūr, and his own brother 'Abd Allāh. Tab., III, 1739, 1796 ff., 1813, 1815, 1823.

had gone too far to be restored so simply, and as soon as the army felt that they could no longer trust al-Muhtadī he was deposed and murdered Wednesday 18 Rajab 256/21 June 870.¹

Although al-Mu'tamid appears in the pages of the chronicles as a spiritless creature, wholly devoted to pleasure, it is probable that his energetic brother al-Muwaffaq took upon himself so much of the authority that belonged to the office that the Caliph himself existed as but his shadow.² In any event, the Caliphate found a new stability and purpose during this reign and the anarchic situation which had prevailed during the previous decade seems to have passed, with the dignity and respect of the 'Abbāsids restored to something of its former state.

In the nine years between the assassination of al-Mutawakkil in 247/861 and the accession of al-Mu'tamid in 256/870, the anarchy which prevailed in the heart lands of Islam reduced the authority and respect of the Caliphate to depths from which it seemed impossible for it ever to emerge.³ Basic to all the troubles which marked each year of this period was the inability of the dynastic family to

1. Yaqubi, III, 189; Tab., III, 1818; cf. Ibn Kathir, XI, 23.

2. Fakhri, p. 186, writes that this reign was a very surprising one because the Caliph and his brother al-Muwaffaq seemed to have divided the affairs between them. Al-Mu'tamid only had his name mentioned in prayer and on coins, while al-Muwaffaq received all other tributes. Al-Mu'tamid was involved in his social life and paid no attention to governmental affairs which led his brother to become the real director of the Empire.

3. Ibn al-Mu'tazz, Rasā'il Ibn al-Mu'tazz, p. 82.

remain united and resist the inducements of power and prestige with which self-interested parties tempted them. But how transient and dangerous power gained in this way could be soon became apparent, and what might have been a headlong descent into total chaos was halted in mid-career, and the Caliphate entered upon a new phase in its history during which it was strong enough to survive even such disasters as the Buwayhid occupation in 335/945.¹ The period, therefore, can be regarded as having a positive aspect in that it impressed on the members of the family the necessity for co-operation among themselves if they were

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1. "There is a well known passage of Ibn al-Athīr (viii, 339) in which he comments for his readers on a problem that he supposes to have confronted the Buwayhid Mu'izz ad-Dawla after his occupation of Baghdad in 946. I have heard (balaghanī) that Mu'izz ad-Dawla consulted several of his close associates on the question of extruding the 'Abbāsids from the Caliphate and giving allegiance to al-Mu'zz li-Dīn Allāh al-'Alawī or some other of the 'Alids. All of them advised him to do so except one, who said, 'This is no sound opinion. Today you have alongside you a Caliph whom neither you nor your followers believe to be of the House of the Caliphate, and if you were to command them to kill him they would do so When you install one of the 'Alids as Caliph, there will be alongside you one whose Caliphate would be held to be lawfully established by you and by your followers, and if he were to order them to kill you they would do so. So give up this idea'." H.A.R. Gibb, "Government and Islam under the Early 'Abbāsids," Elaboration de L'Islam, VIII, 1961-1962, p. 115.

to survive;¹ and, probably most important, it showed that reliance on mercenary troops was no longer a feasible policy in what future held for them. The respect of the masses had to be regained, and this was done by stressing the sacred nature of the Caliphate and presenting the incumbent of the office in a semi-priestly role as the physical expression of the will of God. The Caliph, henceforth, must above all else be seen as a good man, the true representative of the ideal of Islam.²

Probably one could trace the causes which led to this anarchy to the absence of any fixed dynastic principle within the 'Abbāsid family, which allowed the succession to be subjected to the caprice of the power-hungry factions within the Capital. In this respect the 'Abbāsids were no further advanced than the Umayyads and, indeed, as they did not have Arab tribal precedent to rely upon, their situation was even more uncertain and confused. We, therefore, have the absurd spectacle of the chief personage of a vast Empire occupied only with intrigues and plots to maintain his own position in the face of potential rivals from within

1. A change for the better had taken place in the Capital. Although the new Caliph al-Mu'tamid was absolutely incompetent himself, very soon after his accession to the throne he made his energetic brother al-Muwaffaq the imperial vice-regent. C. Brockelmann, p. 134; E.A. Belyaev, pp. 202-203; cf. Yaqubi, III, 190-191; Tab., III, 1839 ff.; Fakhri, p. 186.

2. Yaqubi, III, 187-88; Tab., III, 1795-96; Tanbih, p. 318; cf. P. Hitti, History of the Arabs, London 1967, pp. 322, 337; E.A. Belyaev, p. 202.

his family, while the Empire itself was falling to pieces around him.¹ While it cannot be claimed that this period helped towards the establishment of a dynastic principle of succession, at least it ensured that in the future there would be family consensus in such matters.²

1. B. Spuler, The Muslim World, Leyden, 1960, I, 61; cf. Yaqubi, III, 180-183.

2. D. Sourdel, "Abbasid Caliphate", CHI, I, 112.

CHAPTER IV

THE POSITION OF THE FOREIGN OFFICERS IN THE CAPITAL¹

A. Their Attitudes towards the Caliphs

Although there has as yet been no comprehensive study of the organisation of the 'Abbāsid army, or of the structure of command in its ranks, the functions of the dīwān al-jund can be seen to have undergone a marked change after the death of al-Mutawakkil.² The Turkish slave-troops were permitted to enter the ranks of the jund (or standing army), thereby seizing control of the official military establishment in the realm. Henceforth, the technical terms of rank in the army - 'Arīf, Khalīfa, Qā'id, etc.³ - cannot be taken in their former sense, and the general impression given by the sources is that the troops were collected under the personal leadership of one or another of the Caliph's officers.⁴ This absence of a military

1. The term 'foreign officers' is used to refer mainly to the Turkish generals.

2. Cf. EI², s.v. Djund where the author suggests that in the 'Abbāsid period, the term jund continued to apply to the Syrian administrative districts. But the dīwān al-jund, which can be proved to have been still in existence after al-Mutawakkil, also administered the non-Arab contingents.

3. Tab., III, 1799; cf. R. Levy, Social Structure of Islam, p. 412.

4. There is abundant evidence that mamlūks were introduced into the capital in great numbers during the reign of al-Ma'mūn, by both himself and al-Mu'taṣim. Later these mamlūks reached the 'Abbāsid capital through the co-operation of Ṭāhirid 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir and the Sāmānid Nūḥ b. Asād. Yaqubi Buldan, pp. 29-30; Tab., III, 1017; Ibn Khurdādhbih, pp. 37, 39; Ibn al-Dāya, p. 4; al-Kindī, p. 188; cf. D. Ayalon "The Military Reforms of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim", XXVI Congress of Orientalists, New Delhi, 1964, p. 25; O.A. Isma'il, "Mu'taṣim and the Turks" BSOAS, XXIX, 1966, p. 14.

institution in the service of the state, regardless of the individual in power, introduced a serious complication into the affairs of the realm, for there was no reliable force upon which the Caliph could depend, and he was obliged to come to terms with whichever military leader seemed to command the greatest support among the soldiery. This soldiery was, also, mainly of foreign or slave origin,¹ with no commitment to the lands they were supposed to protect. It was apparent that whatever alliance the Caliph might be brought to accept would be primarily in the interest of those who commanded the respect of these troops, rather than in his own interest or that of his state.² The only means the Caliph had to rid himself of these embarrassments was to appoint such generals to lead campaigns at a distance from the capital,³ and this was employed to the greatest extent

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1. Muruḥ, VII, 118, al-Mu'taṣim introduced (iṣṭana'a) men from the tribes of Yaman and Qays in Egypt which he called al-Maghārība; in addition, he brought in (ista'adda) men from Khurāsān and others from Farghāna and Ushrusiyya.
 2. Unlike the other military elements, the Turkish slave troops were so contemptuous in their attitude towards the Caliphs that they dared to stand against any ruler who tried to ignore their demands. M.D. al-Rayīs, al-Kharāj fī al-Dawla al-Islāmiyya, Cairo, 1957, p. 472; cf. EI², s.v. Djaysh.
 3. This was previously to be seen in the cases of Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī who led the army against 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alī in Syria. Yaqubi, III, 85-6; Tab., III, 92-98; Azdi, p. 165. Also, 'Isā b. Mūsā, the potential successor to al-Manṣūr, was sent against Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya in Mecca and then against his brother in Baṣra. Yaqubi, III, 93-96; Tab., III, 189ff.

possible during the period under discussion, but without much benefit to the domestic situation.¹ It would not be a distortion of the facts to describe the Caliphate in this period as an instrument of the ambitions of certain leading officers in their rivalries among themselves.

1. Al-Muntaṣir, for instance, sent Waṣīf al-Turkī to fight the Byzantine army. Tab., III, 1480. In 253/867 Mūsā b. Bughā was sent to the region of Jibāl with a considerable number of Turkish troops. Ibid., 1686.

I. The Relations between the Caliphs and their Military Leaders up to the Reign of al-Muntaṣir

After the part that the army officers had played in bringing Hārūn al-Rashīd to the throne, the influential leaders in the army became aware of the extent of the power they wielded and began to interfere in the affairs of the Empire.¹ By the time of al-Ma'mūn their influence had grown enormously,² and it was the army who secured his Caliphate and gained victory over his rival brother al-Amīn. But the leading officers still retained their loyalty to the Caliph rather than to their own interests, and the situation was to remain thus down to the Caliphate of al-Mu'taṣim. With the advent of the latter, however, the slave troops had reached such numbers that they, too, began to realize the possible extent of their influence; but unlike the earlier Arab and Persian troops, their primary attachment was to their own leaders who, with such support, felt strong enough to challenge the authority of the throne.³

Henceforth, the army was no longer prepared to function in its proper role in defending the state and maintaining its peace and security,⁴ but became a political instrument

1. Yaqubi, III, 115; Tab., III, 599-603; Azdi, p. 261.

2. It was reported that Ashnās the Turk was at the head of the Caliph's army when they departed from Egypt. Kindi, p. 192.

3. Cf. EI², s.v. Djaysh.

4. D. Ayalon states, "Even under al-Mu'taṣim his Mamluks never fought the Turkish and other (mainly pagan) unbelievers living beyond the Islamic frontiers in the areas which stretched from the Black Sea to Afghanistan. They fought heretics in the Caspian mountain areas who were active within the borders of Islam." "The Military Reforms of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim," p. 26.

to be wielded by whichever military leader was capable of winning its confidence and support. The anarchy which this created in the capital spread to certain of the provinces, where military adventurers felt that they could seize power with impunity, and the once-unified empire of the 'Abbāsids was set upon a course of disintegration.¹

Upon al-Mu'taṣim's accession, the army leaders split into two factions, the one supporting the Caliph and the other opposing him. Al-Mu'taṣim was encouraged to rely on the loyalty of those officers who favoured their compatriots, the slave-troops² and when, in 223/838, an unsuccessful plot by the non-Turkish officers to assassinate him and his important generals was uncovered and suppressed, the dependence of the Caliph on these foreign mercenaries increased.³ This policy, which indeed threatened the

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1. D. Ayalon elaborates on this point stating, "The appearance of the Mamlūks as a major military force under the 'Abbāsids roughly coincided with the beginning of the disintegration of their Caliphate, a fact which prevented the Caliphs from making proper use of them. "The Military Reforms of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim", p. 26.
 2. The Caliph al-Mu'taṣim, who reinforced his military strength with Turkish soldiers, granted the Turkish leader Ashnās an important iqṭā's in a district of his new capital. Yaqubī, Buldan, p. 32.
 3. The plot was formed during the Caliph's campaign against the Byzantines in this year, and these officers felt that they were being discriminated against in the roles to which they were assigned, the Turks being given all the important positions. Tab., III, 1236-38; Azdi, p. 426; Muruj, VII, 135.

security of the Caliph and the lives of his generals had, in fact, hastened the advance of the powerful leaders to a position of strength and influence.¹ However, the latter did not yet feel strong enough to openly defy al-Mu'taṣim, who still enjoyed some of the traditional respect of the army; but behind the scenes they were active in pursuit of their own interests, regardless of the welfare of the state.² Al-Mu'taṣim was not unaware of what was going on and it is recorded that he expressed regret for having advanced men, such as Afshīn, Ashnās, Ītākh and Waṣīf, to positions of power and longed for such men as those who served his brother, al-Ma'mūn.³ Yet he made no effort to suppress or limit their influence in the capital, and, in fact, went to such lengths to win their favour that he allowed Ītākh to murder the innocent sons of al-Ma'mūn.⁴

During his short reign, al-Wāthiq proved no more capable than his father in dealing with this menace to the state and himself. He put himself even more under the control of the military leaders.⁵ Thus, his favourite,

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1. Ibn Badrūn, Sharḥ Qaṣīdat Ibn 'Abdūn, ed. R.P.A. Dozy, Leyden, 1848, pp. 292-93.
 2. It is stated that Afshīn even encouraged the Caspian rebel, Māziyār, in his plans to overthrow the Caliphate. Yaqubi, III, 167; Tab., III, 1304ff.
 3. Al-Mu'taṣim said this to Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm b. Muṣ'ab who, together with his brother Muḥammad, his uncle Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn and the latter's son 'Abd Allāh, were recognised as the four men most favoured by al-Ma'mūn. Tab., III, 1327-28.
 4. Moreover, the Caliph had already raised some other powerful leaders to the position of provincial governor. Tab., III, 1302-1303; Azdi, p. 416.
 5. Cf. C. Brockelmann, p. 131.

Ashnās, although already holding the governorship of Egypt,¹ was further publicly honoured in 228/843 by being presented with a cloak of honour and two swords.² When he died in 230/845, Egypt, along with certain other provinces, was given to Ītākh³ and, like his predecessor, he, too, did not leave the capital to take up his appointment but sent an agent to act for him there.⁴ This privilege of allowing deputies to serve on behalf of the governors of the provinces had previously been reserved for members of the 'Abbāsīd family; but during the Caliphate of al-Mu'tasim it was extended to include the powerful Turkish generals, whom the Caliph looked to for support and whose presence in the capital he regarded as essential for his own security. In this new order of authority we find the Caliph, for the first time, excluding his own family from the centres of power and fixing his hopes on men who had little stake in the prosperity or even the survival of the state.⁵

1. Yaqubi, III, 169.

2. Yaqubi, III, 169; Tab., III, 1330.

3. Yaqubi, III, 169-70; during the reign of this Caliph the Ītākhiyya lands, which lay to the east of the capital and were watered by the Rātūl canal, a most important fruit-producing district, became an iqtā' granted by the Caliph himself to Ītākh. Yaqubi, Buldan, p. 39; cf. H.B. El-Samarra'i, Agriculture Life in Iraq, Ph.D. Thesis, London University, 1970, p. 193.

4. Kindi, pp. 195, 196, 197.

5. H.A.R. Gibb sees this as the rise of a new bureaucratic class deriving from the military arm of the state, and endangering the former administrative organisation of the Empire which was largely based on the 'Abbāsīd family. "Government and Islam under the Early 'Abbāsīds", pp. 123-24.

Yet we find that during the reign of al-Mu'tasim and al-Wāthiq the leading officers showed themselves to be loyal and devoted to the Caliph, quelling anti-'Abbāsīd revolts and participating in certain campaigns.¹ The false sense of security which this created in the two Caliphs was to allow the even further encroachments made on their authority to go almost unnoticed. After al-Wāthiq's death it was the military personnel who were in a position to say who should be his successor.²

Al-Mutawakkil owed his accession to the throne to the influential generals such as Sīmā al-Turkī, Waṣīf and Bughā al-Sharābī (al-Ṣaghīr), and he began his reign by blessing the Turks who had supported him³ and tried hard to keep them satisfied. Thus, he put Ītākh in command of the jaysh and other regular army formations, giving him also the office of hājib and the charge of running the palace.⁴ From time to time, Bughā al-Ṣaghīr and Waṣīf, too, held the office of hājib in addition to their military commands.⁵ By assigning the leading officers to high posts at the court, the Caliph seemed to be inviting them to extend their power, and it was inevitable that this would ultimately come into conflict with his own authority. In 235/849-50, in the course of a drinking party, al-Mutawakkil became drunk

1. Yaqubi, III, 163-68, 169-72; Tab., III, 1170ff.

2. Yaqubi, III, 172; Tab., III, 1368-69.

3. Yaqubi, III, 172; Tab., III, 1368-70; Kamil, VII, 22-23.

4. Tab., III, 1383; cf. Miskawayh, VI, 542; Kamil, VII, 29.

5. Yaqubi, III, 174, 176.

and insulted Ītākh in the presence of the other guests, and so angry did the Turk become that he was on the point of murdering him. Appalled by his own recklessness, the Caliph on the following morning expressed regret for his behaviour and begged Ītākh's pardon. But he realized that he could never feel secure as long as the latter remained alive; at first he had him removed from the capital by putting him in charge of the pilgrimage, and on his return he had him murdered. His two sons were detained in prison until the accession of al-Muntaṣir in 247/861.¹

All the offices and dignities which Ītākh had held were bestowed on the equally powerful general, Waṣīf.² Other Turkish officers were promoted by the Caliph to important military positions; in 237/851 Yazīd al-Turkī was successful in suppressing a revolt in upper Egypt;³ in 238/852, Bughā al-Kabīr was placed in command of an expedition to Armīniyya;⁴ in 241/855 Ṣāliḥ b. 'Abbās al-Turkī, the governor of Damascus, played an effective role in suppressing a revolt in Ḥims.⁵

1. Ītākh was murdered in Baghdad on his return to Samarra from Mecca. Yaqubi, III, 173, emphasises the role of another Turk, Sa'īd al-Ḥājib, in this murder, while Tab., III, 1384-86, and other historians made Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm, the governor of Baghdad responsible. Muntazam, XI, 95a.

2. Tab., 1385-86; Miskawayh, VI, 542.

3. Kindi, pp. 200, 202; Khitat, II, 103.

4. Tab., III, 1414; cf. EI² s.v. Bughā al-Kabīr.

5. Tab., III, 1422. Ḥims was an ancient and famous city located between Damascus and Aleppo. It came under Arab rule without fighting. Then the Arabs settled in the City which comprised mostly Yamanīt tribes. Yaqut, Buldan, II, 334-8; EI², s.v. Ḥims.

In 242/855-856 Yazīd al-Turkī was appointed governor of Egypt, and seems to have discharged the office to the Caliph's satisfaction.¹

When al-Mutawakkil became aware of the extent to which his early attitude to these Turks had allowed them to appropriate virtually all the effective power in the state, he attempted to restore the situation by making an appeal for popular support, through showing favour to the old orthodox element in the community.² It may be that the appointment of powerful Turks to positions outside the capital was merely a pretext to rid himself of their presence while he was re-organizing the power-structure in this way; though, of course, they did prove useful in maintaining his authority against rebels in the provinces.

The Caliph's negative attitude towards his leading officers can be seen, also, in his policy towards the succession. In 235/849 he appointed his three sons as his successors in order of their ages, and divided the Empire among them, instead of designating these provinces to the army leader as his immediate predecessors had done. Thus the Caliph was seen to be restoring the practice of the period prior to al-Mu'taṣim, when provincial power, also, was secured by members of the 'Abbāsid family, and in this way some part at least of the influence of the leading officers could be curtailed.³ In the capital itself he sought to limit their authority by elevating men such as

1. Kindi, pp. 202-203.

2. Al-Tikriti, pp. 2, 32.

3. Tanbih, pp. 313-14; B.K. al-Tikriti, p. 54.

Fath b. Khāqān and 'Ubayd Allāh b. Yahyā to positions of authority.¹ The Caliph also sought to divide the powerful leaders by preferring one group to another in the distribution of favours and appointments.²

The Caliph's eldest son, al-Muntaṣir, who was bitterly opposed to his father's policy encouraged and supported the powerful officers, who had suffered discrimination, to take further action against his father.³ When in 247/861, the Caliph confiscated the diyā' of Waṣīf and assigned these lands to his vizier, Fath b. Khāqān,⁴ Waṣīf and certain other discontented officers were encouraged by al-Muntaṣir to take a decisive stand, and within two months the Caliph was murdered. Thus ended the inviolability and the freedom of action of the individual who occupied the highest office in the Islamic state; and the complicity of his own son in the murder which brought this about is indicative of a fundamental malaise within the dynasty itself which was merely exploited by opportunists and adventurers.

1. Yaqubi, III, 173, 175, 179; Tab., III, 1389, 1441, 1444, 1446-47, 1452ff.

2. Thus, the Turk Bughā al-Sharābī was so influential that even his son Fāris was able to appoint a certain Sa'īd b. Muḥammad as governor of Adharbāyjān and Armīniyya. Tab., III, 1407. Bughā al-Kabīr, too, was granted special favours and it was his presence which stood in the way of an assassination attempt against the Caliph by a group of dissatisfied Turkish generals in Damascus in 249/858. Their intrigues succeeded in having him removed from the court, but the assassination plot was never carried out. Muruḥ, VII, 254-66; cf. Tab., III, 1436.

3. Yaqubi, III, 178; Muruḥ, VII, 273; Fakhri, p. 177.

4. Tab., III, 1452.

Whatever the ultimate intention of the Turkish leaders may have been, it is certain that their support was sought by elements which had the fixed purpose of deposing the Arabs from the direction of the Empire which they had brought into being.¹ And for this reason, their power was based on the loyalty of the troops of their own race rather than on the established army.

1. Mazyār is reported to have said, "Know that I, Afshīn, and Ḥaydar b. Kā'ūs and Bābak, all four of us, have for a long while covenanted and agreed to take the Empire from the Arabs and restore it to the Kisras of Persia." Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 155.

2. The Role of the Turkish Generals in the Period 247-256 /861-870.

Al-Mutawakkil's murder was carried out by a group of Turkish generals who had previously agreed among themselves to take the oath of allegiance to al-Muntaşir. It was on their advice that the new Caliph sent Sa'īd al-Saghīr and Sa'īd al-Kabīr to bring al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad to the court so that they, too, could profess their loyalty to him.¹ In as much as al-Muntaşir gave these generals a free hand in the direction of affairs and did not venture to interfere in their activities, the relations between the two were at first exceedingly harmonious.² Of course, through his behaviour in the struggle for power, al-Muntaşir had alienated all the other elements in the state to which he might have looked for support. In order to win back some measure of sympathy from these latter, he expressed his deep sorrow at the fate that had befallen his father, and denied his part in the conspiracy by openly accusing the Turkish generals of conceiving and executing the plot.³ Later historians were misled into accepting this as the true version of the facts, and credited al-Muntaşir with innocence in the affair.⁴

1. Tab., III, 1473-75.

2. Yaqubi, III, 179; Tab., III, 1479ff.; Tanbih, p. 314.

3. Muruj, VII, 300; Muntazam, XII, 6b; Kutubi, II, 372.

4. Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Mawrid al-Latāfa, Ms. no. 30 Ta'rīkh, Dār al-Kutub al-Zāhiriyya, Damascus, fol. 76b. Whenever al-Muntaşir got drunk, he used to curse the generals for murdering his father; to which they would reply, "Qatala-hu man qatala-hu, wa-nahnu la-nalamu" meaning al-Muntaşir himself. TDA, fol. 59a.

When al-Mu'tazz refused to renounce his rights to the Caliphate, as had been stipulated in the testament of al-Mutawakkil, it was these generals who were active in persecuting him, and they also put pressure on al-Muntaşir, so that he too should bring his brothers to agree to their designs for having his son 'Abd al-Wahhāb proclaimed his successor.¹ In this way, these leading officers sought to ensure the continuity of their own power, and they were vigilant in suppressing any threat to it from other political factions who might have secured another 'Abbāsīd as their figure head.

Al-Muntaşir, despite his own complicity in the murder of al-Mutawakkil and the guilt he shared with the Turkish generals who had carried it out, was not able to maintain amicable relations with them. They were eager to get rid of him, but he was aware of their intentions, and was on guard to frustrate them, hoping eventually to restore the Caliphate to some of its former supremacy, in the capital, at least.² He failed to get any support however, while the leading officers were growing more united in their resolve to be rid of him before he could make any serious encroachment on their power.³ According to al-Ṭabarī, it

1. Tab., III, 1486-88.

2. Certain later historians, for example, Dhahabī, Tarikh, XII, 82a; Suyūṭī, Ta'rīkh al-Khulafā', Cairo, 1383/1964, p. 143; Ibn Taghrī Bardī, fol. 76b., refer to this fact.

3. The leading officers discussed the matter, and reached the conclusion that they could see no hope for their future if al-Muntaşir remained in power. Therefore they ought to unite and get rid of him. TDA, fol. 54a.

was the vizier Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb who encouraged them to think about replacing al-Muntaṣir with some other member of the 'Abbāsid family,¹ but al-Dhahabī reports that Bughā al-Ṣaghīr was the instigator of the conspiracy, and that he encouraged the other Turkish officers to look to him for a solution to the problem.²

Before he had occupied the throne for six months, al-Muntaṣir fell seriously ill, and the conspirators seized on this as an opportunity to put their plans into effect. The Caliph's physician, Tayfūr, was given a bribe of thirty thousand dinars to see that he never recovered, and the story goes that a poisoned scalpel was used in the performance of a venesection which resulted in death.³ Even if there is some speculation regarding the historicity of such an account, there are indications in our early source, al-Ṭabarī, which explicitly refer to the death of this Caliph as being caused by the poisoned scalpel which his doctor had used.⁴ Al-Ṭabarī might not have dared to state clearly that the Turkish generals were behind this murder owing to their superior power at a time.

1. Tab., III, 1485-86.

2. Dhahabī, Tarikh, XII, 82a.

3. Al-Ishāqī, Akhbār al-uwal fī man Taṣarafa fī Miṣr min Arbāb al-Duwal, Cairo, 1311A.H., p. 92; Dhahabī, Tarikh, XII, 82a; TDA, fol. 54a. Another account speaks of the Caliph's servant being bribed to poison the pears of which he was so fond. Muntazam, XII, 6b.

4. Tab., III, 1496.

Al-Muntaṣir died late in the afternoon of Sunday 9 Rabī' II 248/6 August 862. The army leaders, including Bughā al-Ṣaghīr, Bughā al-Kabīr, and Atāmish gathered together with their followers in the Hārūnī palace and had the officers of the Turks, the maghāribā, and the ushrūsniyya swear that they would approve and sanction everything that Bughā al-Kabīr and Bughā al-Ṣaghīr might decide. The meeting was directed by the vizier Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb, the participants agreeing among themselves that under no circumstances would they choose one of the progeny of al-Mutawakkil as Caliph, for the army officers had played a part in his assassination and consequently were afraid that whichever son assumed the throne¹ would then avenge his father's death. Consequently the generals agreed not to let the Caliphate pass out of the circle of the descendants of their dead master al-Mu'taṣim.² There was a divergence of opinion among the leading officers concerning the kind of person they wished to be Caliph. Bughā al-Kabīr wanted someone of strong personality, highly respected by his subjects as well as by the generals. Thus they themselves would stand in awe of him and be obedient to his commands; and under such circumstances they and their followers would be able to maintain the unity which was their main strength. The rest of the Turkish generals, however, disagreed with Bughā's view, and looked instead

1. Yaqubi, III, 180; Tab., III, 1485-86, 1501.

2. Tab., III, 1501; Ibn al-Sā'ī, p. 68; Ibar, III, 283.

for someone who would be subservient to their will and leave them in control of the situation. In the end, they succeeded in persuading Bughā to accept the nomination of Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Mu'taṣim (al-Musta'in) instead of Aḥmad b. al-Mu'taṣim.¹

The factionalism which existed within the Turkish military leadership was one of the main reasons why they were never able to establish continuity of power in their own hands, but when an immediate objective presented itself they could occasionally submerge their differences for their common benefit and stand united against any opposition which could threaten their position. During the short reign of al-Muntaṣir, the Turkish generals became the real masters of the Empire, with Bughā al-Kabīr, Bughā al-Ṣaghīr and Atāmish playing the role of king-makers.²

On the other hand, they had to take into consideration the respect which the Caliph still commanded amongst the pious Muslims, to whom he was above all the imām al-mu'minīn and the divinely ordained leader of the people. This was a force which they never felt able to challenge openly.³ The most convenient way of getting over this obstacle to

1. Tab., III, 1502-503; cf. Yaqubi, III, 180. Al-Ya'qūbī, however, mentions that a few generals rejected the nomination of al-Musta'in to the Caliphate.

2. N. Abbott, "Arabic papyri of the reign of Ḡa'far al-Mutawakkil", ZDMG, XCII, 1938, 91-92.

3. Cf. R. Levy, A Baghdad Chronicle, p. 107. He points out that any attempt to wield the Caliph's authority against his consent would have roused the whole of the Empire, which was still loyal to the 'Abbāsids.

their ambitions was to ensure that the person holding the Caliphate would be amenable to their wishes, and they could then use this pious support for their own purposes. Thus they by-passed 'Abd al-Wahhāb and elevated al-Musta'īn instead.¹ It was now a political fact that the support of the leading officers was the indispensable qualification for any 'Abbāsīd who aspired to the Caliphate;² but on the other hand these officers had to confine their choice to members of the 'Abbāsīd family and at no time did they have the confidence to attempt a dynastic change.³

As soon as al-Musta'īn ascended the throne he rewarded his powerful patrons by appointing Atāmish as his vizier, with the governorship of Egypt and the Maghrib.⁴ At the same time Bughā al-Ṣaghīr received Ḥulwān, Māsbadhān, Mihrjān and Qadhaq. Shāhik al Khādim (the eunuch) was given responsibility for the running of the palace, the stables, the harem, the arsenal and the private business affairs of the Caliph. Moreover, Atāmish and Shāhik were given priority over all other dignitaries and al-Musta'īn allowed them a free hand in dealing with the buyūt al-amwāl.⁵

1. Tab., III, 1502-1503; TDA, fol. 54b; cf. Sibṭ, IX, 257a.

2. W.M. Watt, What is Islam?, p. 122.

3. R. Levy, p. 107.

4. Tab., III, 1503, 1501; Muntazam, XII, 3b; cf. Nujum, II, 330; cf. also Muir, who states, "The new vizier, Atāmish, held the entire patronage of office at his pleasure, and so his fellows as a rule were presented to provincial governments and commands." Muir, The Caliphate, Beirut, 1963, p. 535.

5. Tab., III, 1508, 1512; Muntazam, XII, 4a.

In Jumada, II, 248/August 862, Bughā al-Kabīr fell ill and when he died shortly afterwards all his official ranks were transferred to his son Mūsā, in addition to the posts which the latter already held. Furthermore, Mūsā was appointed chief administrator of the dīwān al-barīd, the ministry of the post.¹ Such irresponsible disposal of preferments by the Caliph encouraged the military leaders to think that there was nothing that would be denied them, and their demands increased beyond measure.² However, the scramble for offices and wealth created rivalries and jealousies among the generals themselves, destroying the possibility of their presenting a united front to the challenge that was eventually to be made to their position.

This rivalry and antagonism was particularly evident among Turkish leaders who had taken the direction of the affairs of the Empire into their own hands. Thus Waṣīf and Bughā al-Ṣaghīr led the rebellion against Atāmish, who had virtually total control while they were almost completely isolated from the court. On Saturday 15 Rabī' I 249/9 June 863, they succeeded in having him murdered. It was reported that Atāmish was with the Caliph in his palace, the jawsaq, when the troops who were searching for him seized it. As it was too late to flee he asked al-Musta'īn for asylum. Not only was this request refused,³ but no sooner had he been put to death than al-Musta'īn sent messages to the provinces

1. Tab., III, 1512-13; Miskawayh, VI, 566.

2. Tab., III, 1506; Muruj, VII, 360-61; Muntazam, XII, 2b; Ibn Kathīr, XI, 2.

3. Tab., III, 1513; Miskawayh, VI, 566; Kamil, VII 80-81; cf. Yaqubi, III, 181.

cursing him for his wrongdoings.¹ Moreover, the Caliph rewarded Waṣīf by adding the governorship of Ahwāz to his other posts, and Bughā received Palestine in addition to what he already held.² After the death of Atāmish, Bughā al-Ṣaghīr became the most notable figure among the generals whose power even the Caliph seemed to fear. At his behest, al-Musta'īn appointed as his vizier Muḥammad b. Faḍl al-Jarjarā'ī after the dismissal of Ṣāliḥ b. Yazdād. Bughā had conceived such a hatred for the latter that he was forced to flee to Baghdad for safety.³

The jealousy and envy rife among the Turkish generals was also to be seen when Bughā and Waṣīf, with the help of the Turkish mercenaries, killed Bāghir, one of the reputed murderers of al-Mutawakkil. The conflict between them arose over property which Bāghir had received in the Sawād as payment for his murderous deed.⁴ Bāghir had insinuated himself into the service of the court, despite the hatred of the Caliph. Al-Musta'īn, of course, dared not show his true feelings, so he pretended to favour the murderers of his uncle.⁵ Nevertheless Bāghir seems to have been aware of the Caliph's discontent and to have learned that there was a plot afoot to have him killed. He, therefore, made his fellow officers swear an oath to stand by him, against all

1. Yaqubi, III, 181.

2. Tab., III, 1514; Ibn Kathir, X, 4.

3. Tab., III, 1514; cf. Fakhri, p. 180.

4. Tab., III, 1535; Sibṭ IX, 269a; Kamil, VII, 89; cf. Muir, p. 537.

5. Tab., III, 1536; Kamil, VII, 90.

threats to his position. They agreed among themselves that they would murder al-Musta'īn, Waṣīf and Bughā and put on the throne either 'Alī b. al-Mu'tasim or the son of the Caliph al-Wāthiq.¹

Their plot was discovered, and the Caliph, unaware of the details, suspected that Bughā and Waṣīf might be implicated in it. He summoned them and said, "I did not ask you to make me Caliph, but you and your people have elected me to this position and now you want to kill me." They both swore their innocence and said they knew nothing about the plot.² The two generals, thereupon, decided to imprison Bāghir, and they had him summoned to the house of Bughā. Bāghir arrived with an armed escort, but he was not allowed into the presence of the generals. Instead, he was arrested and confined to the bath, where he was finally murdered. When the news of Bāghir's arrest reached his followers in Hārūnī, Karkh and Dūr, they marched on Bughā's house and forced an entry, but by this time their leader had already been slain. Alarmed by this reaction, the Caliph and the two generals fled by boat down the river to Waṣīf's palace; and, joined by Shāhik the eunuch and the scribe Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ, they proceeded from here to Baghdad.³

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1. Tab., III, 1537; Sibṭ, IX, 269a; cf. TDA, fol. 56b. It is also reported that the Caliph, Waṣīf and Bughā decided to have Bāghir murdered. Tab., III, 1538; Ibn Kathir, XI, 7.
 2. Tab., III, 1537-38. It was said that a divorced wife of Bāghir informed Bughā and al-Musta'īn's mother about this conspiracy.
 3. Tab., III, 1538-39, 1542-43; cf. TDA, fol. 56b; Ibn Taghrī Bardī, fol. 78a. In the two latter works there is no reference to the murder of Bāghir; they consider the departure of the Caliph and his companions from Samarra to be due to the conflict between the Caliph and Bāghir who remained in the capital alive.

They arrived in this city on the 4 or 5 Muḥarram 251/6-7 November 865, and Samarra was left to the mercies of the army, plunging headlong into anarchy and chaos. It seems that in choosing to identify himself with Bughā and Waṣīf, the Caliph regarded their faction as being stronger than that of any of the other groupings among the leaders in the unending struggle for power; but in lending them his support he compromised himself in the eyes of the people. A popular verse of the time leaves no doubt about how he was now regarded.

A Caliph (al-Musta'īn) is in a cage between Waṣīf and Bughā; he says whatever they tell him like a parrot.¹

For the ruler to have abandoned his capital city to mob-rule must have seemed the ultimate in irresponsibility, just as his servile attitude to men who were probably regarded as little more than barbarians would have deprived him of dignity and respect in the eyes of his subjects. With Bāghir now dead and the issue as to which faction among the Turks would eventually prove most powerful still not clear, al-Musta'īn gambled his own future on the prospects of Bughā and Waṣīf.

In having lost the presence of the Caliph, Samarra felt that its own status as a city had been lowered, so a delegation was sent to Baghdad to beg his forgiveness and plead with him to return. When they entered his presence, they prostrated themselves before him, placing their girdles on their necks as a sign of obedience. The Caliph accused them of lack of devotion, ingratitude and insubordination, saying, "Did you not intercede with me for your sons, and have I not had about

1. Muruḥ, VII, 325; Dhahabī, Tarikh, XII, 12a; Suyūṭī, p.143.

two thousand of them enrolled in the army because of your continual insistence? I have had about four thousand of your daughters entered in the register of those married females who receive regular pensions. I have given so much to your immature youths and children that I have had gold and silver melted down, and sacrificed my own pleasures and desires for the sake of your happiness and satisfaction. But you increased your brutalities, corrupt practices, intimidations and tyrannical actions."¹ The members of the delegation admitted that they had made great mistakes in their attitude towards the Caliph and his subjects and begged his forgiveness. When this was granted, the chief of the delegation said to the Caliph brusquely, "If you have really pardoned us, come and ride with us to Samarra where the Turkish troops are awaiting your arrival."² His manner of address was regarded as disrespectful, and when he was reprimanded for it he took offence and returned to Samarra with his people.³ Nevertheless, the Caliph still promised them that their allowances would be continued.⁴

After their unsuccessful attempt to persuade al-Musta'īn

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1. Tab., III, 1544; Miskawayh, VI, 578-79; cf. Ibn Taghrī Bardī, fol. 78a, makes no mention of a delegation sent to Baghdad, but says that correspondence took place only through messengers.
 2. Tab., III, 1544; Kamil, VII, 92.
 3. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir struck the leader of the delegation on the head and scolded him, "Does one say to the Commander of the Faithful, 'Come and ride with us?'" The Caliph laughed and said, "These are ignorant people (qawm 'ujm), they do not know the language." Tab., III, 1544; Kamil, VII 92-93.
 4. Tab., III, 1545; Kamil, VII, 93.

to return to his capital, the leading officers in Samarra decided to elevate al-Mu'tazz to the Caliphate in his place. They had him brought from his prison together with his brother al-Mu'ayyad and placed him on the throne, recognizing that al-Mu'ayyad would be his successor.¹ Al-Mu'tazz, it would seem, was forced to accept the throne under the threat of death if he refused, but the question remains as to why the leading officers nominated one of al-Mutawakkil's sons, who might be expected to seek revenge for his father's murder. Although the sources provide no clear explanation for this, it is possible that the generals felt more secure now than they had at the death of al-Muntasir. Moreover, the sons of al-Mutawakkil, as well as being thoroughly intimidated, might now prove more friendly towards the generals in Samarra, because of Bāghir's murder and the opposition they had shown to the two main participants in the murder of al-Mutawakkil, i.e. Waṣīf and Bughā.² Yet these were the very men who had been associated with Bāghir in the plot to assassinate al-Musta'in and replace him with either Aḥmad b. al-Mu'tasim or the son of al-Wāthiq. That they now brought al-Mu'tazz to the Caliphate only after al-Musta'in refused to return to Samarra shows that they regarded themselves strong enough to prevail, no matter who held the office of Caliph.³

Thus, the Empire had two rival Caliphs at the same time, further increasing the possibilities for intrigue and, in

1. Tab., III, 1545; Baghdad, II, 122.

2. Among those who supported al-Mu'tazz was Sīmā al-Sharābī who was favoured by the Caliph al-Mutawakkil. Tab., III, 1563.

3. Tab., III, 1549-50.

effect, polarizing the anarchy between Samarra and Baghdad.¹ Certain leading officers who had received high office after taking the oath to al-Mu'tazz, shortly afterwards were to be found in Baghdad supporting al-Musta'in.² On the other hand, the governor of Baghdad, Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir stood firmly by al-Musta'in, and when he received the news of the elevation of al-Mu'tazz, he commanded that the supply of provisions (mīra) from Baghdad and Mawṣil to Samarra be cut off. He went even further and issued an order to all tax-collectors of the provinces to send the kharāj revenue to Baghdad instead of Samarra.³

The rift between Baghdad and Samarra continued to deepen and the generals in each city made no move towards compromise. The solution to the problem lay in their hands rather than in those of al-Musta'in or al-Mu'tazz, and most of the correspondence concerned with the war between the two cities was in their names.⁴ However, we also find al-Musta'in corresponding with Sīmā al-Sharābī, who was the main military figure in Samarra, while al-Mu'tazz exchanged letters with Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir.⁵ As a result of this latter correspondence,

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1. It was al-Musta'in who was responsible for this unstable position of the Caliphate, owing to his ineffectual policy towards his powerful leading officers. Ibn Dihya, p. 86.
 2. Tab., III, 1549; Kamil, VII, 93: for example, 'Attāb b. 'Attāb and Sulaymān b. Yasār.
 3. Tab., III, 1554-55; Kamil, VII, 94.
 4. Tab., III, 1553 ff; cf. al-Dhahabī, Duwal al-Islām, I, 118, where he states that it was the powerful generals in Samarra and not al-Mu'tazz who sent the army to Baghdad.
 5. Tab., III, 1554. Both al-Mu'tazz and al-Musta'in were in correspondence with Mūsā b. Bughā, each trying to win him over to his own side. Later Mūsā joined al-Mu'tazz. See also Miskawayh, VI, 581-82.

and probably because Ibn Ṭāhir felt that he could not defeat Samarra, he, in union with Waṣīf and Bughā, withdrew his support from al-Musta'īn, who thereupon abdicated the throne.¹

The accession of al-Mu'tazz to the Caliphate meant the victory of Samarra over Baghdad, which also implied the supremacy of the Turkish generals over the former military leaders. Henceforth, these officers became even more arrogant in their power, as is illustrated by an account preserved in al-Fakhrī: when al-Mu'tazz was enthroned, his courtiers summoned the astrologers and asked them how long the Caliph would live and how long he would retain his Caliphate. A wit who was present said: "I know better than the astrologers how long he will live and reign: as long as it pleases the Turks."²

The new Caliph seems to have made an effort to restore some dignity and security to his office, but he was to be no more successful in this than al-Muntaṣir. He tried first of all to eliminate the authority of Waṣīf and Bughā who were now in Baghdad, and sent an order to the governor to remove their names from the diwān and to prevent them from leaving the city.³ His object in doing this was to prevent these two from regaining contact with the Turkish soldiery, but he was frustrated in his plans, because his brother al-Mu'ayyad and al-Muwaffaq interceded

1. Tab., III, 1625-26. Al-Mu'tazz in his letter to Ibn Ṭāhir after the war, reminded the latter of the promises between them, and criticised him for supporting al-Musta'īn. Al-Mu'tazz, also, told Ibn Ṭāhir he should have been the first person to associate himself with his cause. Ibid., 1594-95.

2. Fakhri, p. 181.

3. Tab., III, 1658.

on the generals' behalf.¹ Al-Mu'tazz was compelled to reinstate them in all their offices with honour, after they came back to Samarra.²

Certain discontented generals in the army of Samarra attempted to organize a plot against the Caliph in favour of his brother al-Mu'ayyad, but their plans were discovered and the latter was killed and his supporters severely punished.³ The Caliph summoned Mūsā b. Bughā and asked him about the matter. Mūsā conceded the real reasons behind the plot, and said: "O Commander of the Faithful, they want to rescue (from prison) Abū Aḥmad (al-Muwaffaq) whom they love because he served in the recent war; they do not love al-Mu'ayyad."⁴

The attitude of al-Mu'tazz towards these generals can be seen in the appeal for support he made to 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir, the governor of Khurāsān, in order to suppress their influence in the capital. 'Ubayd Allāh sent his uncle Sulaymān at the head of a military force and it is said that it actually reached Samarra. Waṣīf and Bughā objected strongly to the coming of non-Turkish soldiers to the capital, thinking that these troops would probably be used to undermine their supremacy. Therefore they forced the Caliph to order these troops to move to Baghdad.⁵

1. Tab., III, 1659-60; cf. Muruḥ, VII, 394; Sibṭ, IX, 275a, where this intercession is attributed to the powerful generals of Samarra.

2. Tab., III, 1660; Sibṭ, IX, 275a.

3. It was mentioned that Kanjūr, al-Mu'ayyad's Ḥājib, was severely punished on the grounds that he had organized the plot. Tab., III, 1668-69.

4. Tab., III, 1669; Sibṭ, IX, 276b; al-Qudā'ī, fol. 101b.

5. Yaqubi, III, 185.

Waṣīf had now become very powerful, and enjoyed a free hand in government affairs, as may be observed from his correspondence with the various provinces.¹ This arrogation of power provoked the resentment of the Caliph and certain other generals, and in consequence they contrived to have Waṣīf murdered on 27 Shawwāl 253/30 October 869. The Caliph now transferred all his powers and privileges to Bughā al-Sharābī (al-Ṣaghīr), who had recently been honoured with a crown (tāj) and two swords.²

Despite these outward signs of respect and favour, the Caliph feared Bughā al-Ṣaghīr and considered him his arch-enemy.³ Bughā was aware of the Caliph's attitude and was himself planning to put an end to his reign and his life;⁴ but he fell victim to his own over-confidence.⁵ The story of his murder is not without interest: Bughā had been urging the Caliph to go to Baghdad, probably so that he could remain supreme in Samarra.⁶ Taking advantage of Bughā's pre-occupation with the arrangements for the wedding of his daughter to Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf in Dhū al-Qi'da 253/November 867, al-Mu'tazz, accompanied by his vizier, Aḥmad b. Isrā'īl, and numerous soldiers, one night rode to Karkh of Samarra to visit Bāykabāk, another important Turkish general, who was said to have been in hiding there because of his conflict with Bughā.⁷ On his return to the jawsaq he was accompanied

1. Tab., III, 1685.

2. Yaqubi, III, 185; Tab., III, 1688.

3. Tab., III, 1687.

4. Tab., III, 1697; Tanbih, p. 316.

5. Cf. Yaqubi, III, 185.

6. Cf. Muir, p. 540.

7. Tab., III, 1694.

by Bāykabāk and the troops from Karkh and Dur who were under his command. On learning of this visit, Bughā felt himself threatened, so he left Samarra with five hundred men, taking with him a considerable amount of money from the treasury. Apprehensive of his return, al-Mu'tazz slept fully clothed and armed, while his slave girls kept watch all night for fear of a surprise attack.¹ After a few days, the soldiers of Bughā started complaining and grumbling about the privations they were suffering, for it was winter and they had no tents. Afraid of mutiny and concerned for his own safety, Bughā secretly left his camp by night and went by boat down to Samarra, unarmed and with very little money, and accompanied by only two slaves.² When the boat reached the bridge of Samarra, the guards stationed there detailed Bughā and informed the Caliph, who immediately ordered that he be executed. This was done and the chief of the guards was rewarded with 10,000 dinars and a robe of honour.³ The story shows how the Caliph used his generals one against the other in order to strengthen his own position. Moreover, it reveals the type of relationship which existed both between the generals themselves and between the Caliph and his officers. The death of Bughā, however, seriously affected the position of certain members of his family as well as his

1. Al-Mu'tazz is reported to have said to his courtiers that he was afraid that Bughā would descend from the sky or come out from the ground. Tab., III, 1694; Muruji, VII, 396-97.

2. Tab., III, 1695-96; Dhahabi, Tarikh, XII, 73a.

3. Tab., III, 1696; Muntazam, XII, 27a; cf. Kamil, VII, 126.

supporters. Two of his sons fled to Baghdad where they took refuge with some trusted friends, but they were tracked down and imprisoned by the governor of the city. In addition, he imprisoned fifteen men from among Bughā's family and supporters in the qaṣr al-dhahab, and ten more in the maṭbaq.¹

One by one al-Mu'tazz was eliminating his powerful generals, and was apparently in a position to exact revenge for his father's murder.² Tha'ālibī informs us that Qabiḥa always encouraged her son to wreak his vengeance on these Turks, and it was towards this end that Waṣīf and Bughā were deposed.³ He was obviously seeking their total elimination, the result of which could only have been propitious for the future of the Caliphate. However, the followers of these two leaders realized what al-Mu'tazz had in mind, and united themselves with other groups in opposition.⁴ Another obstacle to his plan was Ṣāliḥ, the energetic son of Waṣīf, who had stepped into his father's place of power. Thus in Rabī' I 254/August 868, Ṣāliḥ was in a position to grant to Daywadār the son of Afshīn, Dīyār Muḍar, Qinnasrīn and the

1. Tab., III, 1696-97; cf. Kamil, VII, 126.

2. EI², s.v. Bughā al-Ṣaghīr; D. Sourdél, Le Vizirat 'Abbāside, I, 296. He states that the Caliph took these steps in order to ameliorate the disasters which had befallen the Caliphate, and to gain revenge on the leading officers who had formerly supported the pretensions of al-Muntaṣir and murdered his father.

3. Tha'ālibī, Thimār al-Qulūb, Cairo, 1384/1965, p. 86.

4. Muruj, VII, 347.

'Aw'āsim. At the same time Bāykabāk granted Miṣr to Aḥmad b. Tūlūn.¹ So seriously had the political capacities of the Caliph been reduced, that even when he was able to rid himself of an enemy, the place of the latter was immediately filled by another equally dangerous. Ṣāliḥ did not even bother to ask the Caliph for permission in appointing governors to the above regions.

Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf went even further and decided to rid himself of the Caliph's secretaries who were opposing his numerous demands. He informed the Caliph, in the presence of the vizier and the secretaries, that the army was receiving no wages and that there was no money in the treasury because Ibn Isrā'īl and his followers had stolen everything. Aḥmad Ibn Isrā'īl, who enjoyed the support of the Caliph, immediately refuted this claim, telling Ṣāliḥ, "You are a rebel and a son of a rebel."² The argument continued between the two in the presence of al-Mu'tazz and grew so heated that Ṣāliḥ fainted with anger. His men who were waiting outside the gates heard this and rushed towards the palace with their swords drawn. They threatened al-Mu'tazz who escaped from them by retiring to a private apartment.³ After a short while Ṣāliḥ regained consciousness and ordered his supporters to put the secretaries in chains and lead them away. Before they left, however, the Caliph begged Ṣāliḥ to free Aḥmad b. Isrā'īl, who was his private secretary and tutor, but the stubborn leader refused this request.⁴ Although there may

1. Tab., III, 1697; cf. Yaqubi, III, 185.

2. Tab., III, 1706-707; Sibṭ, IX, 289a.

3. Tab., III, 1707.

4. Qabīḥa also attempted to intercede for Aḥmad b. Isrā'īl and sent this message to Ṣāliḥ: "I would like you to bring him to al-Mu'tazz, or I myself will come to you on his behalf." Tab., III, 1736.

be doubts as to its historicity, this story shows vividly that the position of the Caliph was regarded by his arrogant praetorians as being no more than the rubber-stamp to put the seal of legitimacy on their own actions. Having placed the vizier and the secretaries in prison, Ṣāliḥ forced al-Mu'tazz to appoint Ja'far b. Muḥammad al-Iskāfī as vizier, and this the Caliph reluctantly did.¹

When Aḥmad b. Isrā'īl still refused to authorize the release of money to pay the Turks, they positioned themselves in front of the palace and sent in a message to the Caliph, asking him to come out and meet them. He replied, "I took some medicine yesterday and I am now too weak to discuss anything with you. If it is something really urgent, a few of you should come and tell me."² Then a group of soldiers forced their way in and, dragging him to his feet, brought him to the door of the room. It was believed that they had cudgelled him, for when he came out his shirt was torn in several places and there were traces of blood on his shoulders.³

The Caliph was deposed on 27 Rajab 255/11 July 869 and, on the instructions of the generals, he was put to torture, under which he died. In order to legitimize their barbarity, his persecutors compelled him to declare that he regarded himself as too weak in character and too much involved in the pleasures of social life to carry out the responsibilities

1. Tab., III, 1707; cf. Fakhri, p. 182.

2. Tab., III, 1710; Kamil, VII, 132. The Caliph, by so doing, showed that he did not suspect treachery from their side.

3. Tab., III, 1710; Ibn Nubāta, II, 125a; al-Ṣafadī, II, 292.

of the Caliphate and that he voluntarily abdicated the office and absolved all those who had rendered the oath of allegiance to him from their obligation. No previous Caliph had ever been subjected to such physical abuse, and later historians attempt to explain the contempt he was shown as arising from defects in his own character which encouraged the Turkish officers to regard him as a non-entity.¹ Completely in control of affairs, Ṣālih b. Waṣīf designated the cousin of al-Mu'tazz, al-Muhtadī b. al-Wāthiq, as the new Caliph.

Al-Muhtadī ascended the throne at a time when the struggle between the executive power and the foreign military officers had reached such a pitch that it could not be stopped. Each Caliph was, of necessity, regarded with suspicion by the very people to whom he owed his elevation, and, aware of this, weak creatures such as al-Muhtadī were prepared to go to any lengths to reassure their barbarous patrons. Thus, al-Muhtadī allowed Ṣālih b. Waṣīf full authority to act in his name, and consented to a campaign of persecution, which had begun in the reign of al-Mu'tazz against the secretarial class, many members of which were tortured or put to death.²

But the very lack of organization and discipline among the Turks was to provide a more effective instrument for curtailing their power than any initiative on the part of

1. Shāṭibī, Kitāb al-Jumān fī Mukhtaṣar Akhbār al-Zamān, Ms. B.M. Or. 1555, fol. 264a; Ibn Hammād, fol. 72b; Suyūṭī, p. 360.

2. Tab., III, 1720-25; Muruḥ, VIII, 12; Kamil, VII, 136; cf. Yaqubi, III, 187-88.

civil authorities. Any excessive increase in the wealth or privileges of one of their number was bound to excite the envy of another, and this would often lead to outright hostility.¹ Thus Mūsā b. Bughā and Muflīḥ, the brothers of Bāykabāk who were on campaign in Rayy, left the region and returned to Samarra against the express command of the Caliph himself.² When the news of Mūsā's departure reached al-Muhtadī, he described it as an act of defiance against the will of God.³ Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf, who may have been aware of Mūsā's intentions, encouraged the Caliph to regard this action as a sign of conspiracy and revolt, aimed at the destruction of the Caliphate.⁴ Certainly Ṣāliḥ saw it as a threat to his own privileged position, and his reactions were to cause another period of chaos and fear in the capital.

1. Muruj, VIII, 3.

2. Tab., III, 1739; Sibt, IX, 291a; Shadharat, II, 131-32; Suyūṭī, p. 145; cf. Muir, p. 544.

3. The Caliph is said to have stretched out his hands to Heaven and cried, "Praise be to God! Into Your hands I commit myself because of what Mūsā b. Bughā has done, leaving brothers in the lurch and surrendering to the enemy. I am not guilty of the discord between him and me. God, may You fight those whom the Muslims fight, may You make the armies of the Muslims victorious everywhere. I am with the Muslims, in thought and will; wherever they suffer bring them help and defend them. God, reward me for my good intentions, even if I should fail after having received help from You." Tab., III, 1740; cf. Sibt, IX, 291b.

4. Tab., III, 1740; cf. Ibn Kathir, XI, 18, where it is stated that al-Muhtadī actually called Mūsā to the capital to protect his own position against the powerful leaders, i.e. Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf and his followers.

Bāykabāk, who was the chief of the palace, al-qā'im bī-amr dār al-khilāfa, and whose authority in certain matters was equal to that of Ṣāliḥ, had recently handed over this post to Sātikīn, who was supposedly loyal to him, believing that he would in this way still retain his power over the palace and the Caliph when Mūsā arrived.¹ As soon as the latter's forces reached the capital on 4 Muharram 256/13 December 869, Bāykabāk joined them.²

Shortly after the arrival of Mūsā's soldiers in the qātūl, Ṣāliḥ went into hiding, fearing that he might be killed and this, indeed, seems to have been Mūsā's intention.³ He accused the Caliph of siding with Ṣāliḥ,⁴ but when al-Muhtadī reproached him for having committed a grave wrong against the Caliph's dignity, he replied: "I only want your good. By the holy grave of al-Mutawakkil; no evil shall befall you from our hands."⁵ It was believed that if Mūsā had really sought the security and safety of the Caliph, he would have sworn either on the grave of al-Mu'tasim or al-Wāthiq and not on

1. Tab., III, 1788.

2. Tab., III, 1742.

3. Tab., III, 1738.

4. Mūsā's suspicions about the Caliph's sympathies began with his arrival in Samarra, when the Caliph did not come out to greet him from the court of law where he was presiding. Both Mūsā and his troops remained for a while outside the court building waiting for the Caliph's permission to enter. Finally, they entered without permission, took the Caliph from his seat and led him outside, heading towards his palace. Tab., III, 1788.

5. Tab., III, 1789.

the grave of al-Mutawakkil, in whose murder he himself had participated.¹ Nevertheless, he exacted from the Caliph an oath that he would not join forces with Ṣāliḥ against him, and this oath was renewed on the night of Tuesday 12 Muḥarram 256/19 December 869.²

Characteristic of the arrogance of these Turkish officers, who could conceive of no limits to their power, it was now mooted whether or not they should replace al-Muhtadī with some other Caliph-figure. But some of them seem to have had reservations about this proposal, and Muḥliḥ is reported as saying, "You killed the son of al-Mutawakkil (i.e. al-Mu'tazz), who was handsome, generous, and of excellent character, and now you want to kill this man who is a Muslim, who fasts, drinks no wine and commits no sin. By God, if you kill him, I will go to Khurāsān and make known your deeds."³ When al-Muhtadī learned of this proposal, he bravely confronted the plotters in the great reception-hall, and said: "I have heard what you have in mind against me. I am not like my predecessors al-Musta'īn or Ibn Qabiḥa (al-Mu'tazz). By God, before coming before you I put balsam, mutahannat, on my body and entrusted my sons to my brothers. Here is my sword! I shall need it as long as I can hold it in my hand! And if you so much as hurt one hair of my head, most of you will perish. Verily you have neither sense of religion, nor shame, nor humility! How long (will you continue)

1. Tab., III, 1460.

2. Tab., III, 1789.

3. Tab., III, 1793; Kamil, VII, 150; cf. Yaqubi, III, 188; Ibn Kathir, XI, 21.

this anarchy, this audacity and revolt against the Caliph?"¹ The Caliph complained of the financial circumstances in which his family had to live, in comparison with those of Bāykabāk and his supporters, thus drawing attention to the humiliating position which the 'Abbāsids had been reduced to during this period.²

Al-Muhtadī openly accused Bāykabāk of complicity in the affairs of Ṣālih b. Waṣīf, and said: "Bāykabāk took part in all that Ṣālih did to the secretaries and in the appropriation of the property of Ibn Qabiḥa, and if Ṣālih took something then Bāykabāk did likewise." This statement is said to have provoked the anger and hatred of the latter towards the Caliph, and disposed him to support any action aimed at putting an end to his reign.³ When the officers who had been Ṣālih's rivals became suspicious of the Caliph's attitude and asked him to swear that he had no secret agreement with Ṣālih, he replied, "I will only swear in the presence of the Hashimids, the Qāḍi, the legal witnesses and the ashāb al-marātib, after the Friday prayer."⁴

1. Tab., III, 1793-94; Kamil, VII, 150-51; Ibn Kathir, XI, 21.

2. The Caliph told Bāykabāk, "Did you not know that some of your supporters are living more prosperously than my brothers and sons? If you want to make sure of this search their houses. You will find no furniture, slaves, servants or singers; they do not even possess the diyā'." Tab., III, 1794; Kamil, VII, 151; Ibn Kathir, XI, 21.

3. Tab., III, 1795; cf. Balawī, Sīrat Aḥmad b. Tūlūn, Damascus, 1358/1959, p. 45; He states that al-Muhtadī had something against Bāykabāk before he ascended the throne. And as soon as he was elevated to the Caliphate, he decided to put an end to this leader's life.

4. Tab., III, 1794; cf. Kamil, VII, 151.

During this period of chaos and anarchy a few meetings took place between the Caliph's representatives and the factious Turkish troops, but they failed to reach any settlement which might help to put an end to the lawless situation that had prevailed in the capital since the assassination of al-Mutawakkil, and which had badly affected the economic and political life of the whole Empire. Meanwhile, many revolts took place in various provinces, some of which succeeded in separating their administration from the central government. Musāwir al-Shārī's revolt in the north of Iraq obliged the Caliph to call a meeting of his officers, and Mūsā, Muflih and Bāykabāk were ordered to lead a campaign against the rebel. They apparently made their preparations and mustered their troops on Wednesday 11 Šafar 256/18 January 870. At the same time they were searching for Šālih whom they did not dare to leave behind in Samarra. After a thorough search in the city his hiding place was uncovered and he was murdered on 23 Šafar 256/30 January 870.¹ A week later, Mūsā b. Bughā, Bāykabāk and Muflih led their troops against Musāwir al-Shārī, accompanied by the Caliph himself as far as the outskirts of the capital.²

The departure of Mūsā and Bāykabāk from the capital offered a new opportunity to the Caliph to restore his power, but circumstances did not favour this design. He tried to play off one general against another, and in this showed how little he was aware of the true situation among the leading

1. Tab., III, 1810; cf. Ibn Hammād, fol. 73a.

2. Tab., III, 1812; cf. Kamil, VII, 156; Ibn Kathir, XI, 22.

officers; his ignorance was to cost him his life.¹ Al-Tabarī gives five different accounts of al-Muhtadī's murder,² all of them putting the responsibility on Mūsā b. Bughā and his followers. The most plausible one centres on his policy towards the generals, the substance of which is explained in the following account.

After the departure of Mūsā, the Caliph sent orders to Bāykabāk to take over command of the troops and to continue the campaign against Musāwir al-Shārī.³ He was, moreover, either to have Mūsā and Muflih murdered and their heads sent to Samarra, or to have them presented in chains before him. Bāykabāk, however, realized the true purpose of the Caliph and he informed Mūsā and Muflih of the orders he had received, telling them, "If the Caliph challenges your supremacy today, tomorrow he will do the same with me."⁴ The three generals, Muflih, Mūsā and Bāykabāk, then decided to return to the capital, and diverted the army from its real course, Bāykabāk departing in advance to assure the Caliph of his support against the other two leaders, but at the same time telling him that he, Bāykabāk, was unable to take any action against them. When the Caliph had been deluded into a sense of security, the three of them would arrange to have him murdered.⁵

1. Muruḡ, VIII, 8; Ibn Kathir, XI, 22.

2. Tab., III, 1813 ff.

3. Tab., III, 1813-15; Kamil, VII, 157; Ibn Kathir, XI, 22.

4. Tab., III, 1814; Muruḡ, VIII, 8-9; Sibṭ, X, 2b; cf.

Ibn 'Amīd, fol. 102a.

5. Tab., III, 1814; Ibn Kathir, XI, 22; cf. Muir, p. 546.

When Bāykabāk arrived in the capital without having fulfilled any of the Caliph's commands, the latter showed signs of displeasure and anger. Bāykabāk offered many plausible excuses but he failed to convince al-Muhtadī who, acting on the advice of Ṣāliḥ b. Ya'qūb b. Ja'far al-Mansūr, had Bāykabāk beheaded.¹

The execution of Bāykabāk irritated the Turkish officers in the capital and prompted them to take action against the Caliph, which led to another period of civil war. The leading officers produced a document signed by al-Muhtadī in which he promised not to enter into any alliance against them, and accepting that they would have the right to depose him should he do so.² The troops supporting the Caliph were soon defeated, and he was placed in prison where, under brutal treatment, he was forced to abdicate the throne. The rebels then brought forward Aḥmad b. al-Mutawakkil, al-Mu'tamid, and appointed him Caliph, public homage being paid to him on 13 Rajab 256/16 June 870. Al-Muhtadī's death was announced only five days later.³

1. Ṣāliḥ told al-Muhtadī that not one of his predecessors had had his courage. For instance, the Caliph Abū Ja'far al-Mansūr had his most powerful general Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī murdered in order to maintain the unity of his empire and he succeeded in doing this without antagonising Abū Muslim's followers; and the latter was even more influential among the inhabitants of Khurāsān than Bāykabāk was with his followers. If al-Muhtadī wanted to control the situation he had to have Bāykabāk murdered. Tab., III, 1815; Kamil, VII, 158.

2. Tab., III, 1822; Sibṭ, X, 8b.

3. Tab., III, 1822-23; Kamil, VII, 161; Nujum, III, 26; cf. Ibn Kathir, XI, 22-23.

Realising that no confidence could be placed in any compact made with the Turkish generals, al-Muhtadī had sought to win the support of the people by adopting a pious way of life and abandoning the social activities of the court.¹ This was not without some success, but the very growth of his popularity among the masses only increased the suspicions of the generals, and provoked them to hostility.² During his short reign, al-Muhtadī failed to organise any new forces powerful enough to counter those of the foreign officers, and the main reason for this failure can again be seen in the rivalry and antagonism among the members of the 'Abbāsid family, which allowed the generals to play them off one against the other. Similarly the Caliphs tried to set the generals against one another but were largely unsuccessful. Although the Caliph sought the co-operation of a few inactive senior members of the family, these latter were unable to bring about a new alliance in his support.

The detailed account of this period of anarchy which appears in the sources has been briefly summarized here to reveal the degree to which the Turkish officers were able to bend to their own will the politico-religious institution of the Caliphate, and to become the true rulers of the realm. The factors which explain how this came about, although never explicitly stated by contemporary observers, are plain to the reader from the accumulation of incidents which appear

1. Yaqubi, 187-88; Muruḡ, VIII, 19-21; Fakhri, pp. 181-82; cf. C. Brockelmann, p. 133; Muir, p. 543.

2. Muruḡ, VIII, 2-3; Diyārbakrī, II, 342; Arbilī, p. 232; Sibt, X, 8a.

in this account.¹ Having, from the reign of al-Ma'mūn, been accustomed to rely on the loyalty of his slave-troops - who at first had no political commitment in the affairs of the state beyond this attachment to their master - each subsequent Caliph increased their numbers, and his dependence on them, until the point was reached where they had become the indispensable condition for his survival.²

It was this selfish quest for survival at the expense of every other consideration that led the Caliphs to flatter the men who rose to authority among these slaves by investing them with high rank and wealth.³ It is not surprising that honours so easily acquired, and ultimately so hollow, came to be looked upon with disdain, and their bestower with contempt. In this situation, a united stand by the members of the 'Abbāsid family might have provided a nucleus around which resistance could have been founded, but in the event each one of them who had any possibility of acceding to the Caliphate showed himself to be an active participant in the plots and intrigues with which the throne was surrounded, and insensible to any motives other than personal ambition. The

1. Ibn al-Mu'tazz, pp. 82-83.

2. Cf. C.E. Bosworth 'Abū 'Abdallāh al-Khwarazmī', JESHO, XII, 1969, p. 117. Professor Bosworth suggests that the 'Abbāsid dīwān al-jaysh was one of the most highly-developed and complex of government departments, thus reflecting the paramount importance of the army in the Caliphate, as the Turkish generals secured their ascendancy over the civil power during the course of the 9th century.

3. Al-Iṣṭakhrī describes how the granting of iqtā's was used by the 'Abbāsid Caliphs on a large scale in their efforts to keep the Turkish leaders busy, and to get rid of them. Al-Iṣṭakhrī, p. 142.

disorders of the period following the murder of al-Mutawakkil, demonstrate the inability of his successors to control a military machine which no longer existed to serve the needs of the Empire, but rather to dominate the life of the capital for its own ends. The capitulation to the whims of the men who controlled this machine was a move as disastrous to the weak Caliphs as to the good order of the state.

However, there is a positive aspect to this short period of anarchy which should be stated: it permitted the dissolution of the artificial complex of provinces which had been patched together in the name of an Islamic Empire since the time of the Arab conquests, and the emergence of new and vigorous states which had the validity of regional, and, in some cases, ethnic unity, as the reason for their existence.¹ In Mesopotamia, too, the solution to the problem of an intractable army, in the reign of al-Mu'tamid, was to lead to the formulation of an Iraqi national policy which, even though it might retain the idea and pretensions of the universal Caliphate, was never again to venture beyond its given borders in pursuance of these fictive goals.²

Significant, too, throughout this brief interval of anarchy, was the fact that there was no attempt made by the

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1. D. Sourdel, "The 'Abbasid Caliphate", CHI, I, 129; C.E. Bosworth, 'Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Khwārazmī, JESHO, XII, 1969, p. 116.
 2. Tab., III, Muruj, VIII, 67; Tanbih, p. 318; Kamil, VII, 308-309; Ibn Kathir, XI, 63.

all-powerful military despots to replace the 'Abbāsids as the legitimate sovereigns of the state, nor in any way to interfere with the religious character of the Caliphate. In the century that had passed since the establishment of the dynasty, the mystique of the family had become so implanted in the political awareness of the people that no physical force was able to dispel it, and this was to be shown to a much greater degree later when even the Shī'ite Buwayhids were obliged to maintain an 'Abbāsīd as the visible head of state. Certainly, much of this mystique was due to the growing religious significance with which the Caliphate was invested, and if a political theory can be said to have existed at this time, it must certainly have given a central position to the role of the Caliph as the source of divine sanction for the secular activities of the state and, thereby, provided the meaning of the state itself.

None of the generals who rose to transitory power at this time was ever in a position to defy the public opinion upon which the real foundations of the Caliphate rested, and from the perspective of history one can observe the short-sighted tendencies of those 'Abbāsīds, who on certain occasions regarded these officers as of more importance than the people. If, instead of trying to exploit their mutual jealousies in order to maintain himself at the centre of his erratic balance, the Caliph had persisted in those occasional appeals to public sentiment, it is difficult to see how these generals could have remained in any position of menace to him or any other minister of the state.

B. Their Attitudes towards the Viziers

The status of the viziers had been insecure since the beginning of the 'Abbāsid dynasty, a situation which was mainly due to the recent institution of this office and the lack of organic structure capable of delineating the duties of such an officer. Therefore a continuous struggle for power took place between the Caliphs and their viziers because each one of them wanted to extend his authority at the expense of the other. Whenever the Caliph noticed that the balance of power or authority had changed in favour of his vizier, the latter suffered in consequence of this alteration. This can be seen in the murder of Abū Salama al-Khalāl,¹ the extermination of the Barāmika² and the assassination of al-Faḍl b. Sahl respectively.³

With the flourishing of the Turkish officers at the court, the caliphs and their military officers had adopted new methods of suppressing the viziers, as well as the secretaries who, in many cases, associated their future with that of the viziers. This change of attitude towards the viziers can be considered a sign of encouragement to the Turkish officers to exert their own authority at the expense of the viziers and scribes. Before this reign the military leaders and the viziers had always worked together to increase their influence at the Court, and through the latter the army

1. Jahshiyari, pp. 90-91; Tanbih, p. 293; Fakhri, pp. 111-113.

2. Yaqubi, III, 127-28; Jahshiyari, pp. 234 ff.; Fakhri, pp. 147 ff.

3. Yaqubi, III, 148-49; Tab., III, 1027; Fakhri, p. 163.

generals gained access to power. Al-Mu'taṣim was the first Caliph to confiscate the property of his vizier.¹

In addition to appropriating the secretaries' property, his immediate successor, al-Wāthiq, also imprisoned them.² Al-Wāthiq's intolerant attitude toward the civil servants had encouraged the Turkish generals to exercise their own authority to the full. But the Caliph seems to have ignored the fact that the suppression of the vizier's power at this time meant the diminution of his own authority, because the Turkish officers intended to retain the power in their own hands whatever the cost. The Caliph's attitude may have been adopted as a result of strong pressure from the army leaders to eliminate the influence of the civil servants.

The struggle for power was not the only contributing factor which led the Caliphs at this time to implement the curtailment of the secretaries' authority. However the conflict among the secretaries³ was the main reason which

1. Yaqubi, III, 163-64; Tab., III, 1181-83; Fakhri, p. 174.

2. Aḥmad b. Isrā'īl paid eighty thousand dinar; Sulaymān b. Wāḥb paid four hundred thousand dinar; Ḥasan b. Wāḥb fourteen thousand dinar; Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb and his clerks a million dinar; Ibrāhīm b. Rabāḥ and his scribes one hundred thousand dinar; Najāḥ b. Salama sixty thousand dinar and Ibn al-Wazīr one hundred and fifty thousand dinar. Yaqubi, III, 170; cf. Tab., III, 1330-31.

3. Ibn al-Abbār, (I'tāb al-Kuttāb, fol. 57b) speaks about the conflict between Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Zayyāt and al-Faḍl b. Marwān. Al-Ṭabarī (III, 1331) refers to the antagonism between Ibn Abī Dū'ād, the chief Qāḍī and Ibn al-Zayyāt, the vizier.

encouraged al-Wāthiq and his supporters, the Turkish generals, for example, to behave in this way towards them.¹ These foreign officers, who were contriving to have the Caliph suppress the main obstacle which might prevent them from expanding their influence, had encouraged him. By so doing, the Turkish officers probably found the chance to obtain important posts and by attaining such significant positions they could oppose any secretary whose power might threaten their supremacy. Therefore, by the end of this short reign the Turkish officers were able to play an important rôle in putting his immediate successor, al-Mutawakkil, on the throne.²

Shortly after al-Mutawakkil's accession to the throne, the office of vizier was adversely affected by the imprisonment of the vizier Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Zayyāt and by his subsequent murder.³ The Caliph's action, however, was an indirect encouragement to the Turkish officers to

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1. This policy also came to be considered as a method which the Caliphs and their powerful Turkish leaders could use to obtain money for the court from the viziers and their scribes. M.D. al-Rayīs, p. 82.
 2. These were Waṣīf and Ītākh. Yaqubi, III, 172. There is also mention of Sīmā al-Sharābī as another Turkish dignitary who played a part in putting al-Mutawakkil on the throne. Tab., III, 1368.
 3. Yaqubi, III, 172; Tab., III, 1370 ff. In addition to this action the Caliph ordered the imprisonment, and then the confiscation of the property, of the following secretaries; 'Umar b. al-Faraj al-R^ukhkh^ajī, Ibrāhīm b. al-Junayd al-Naṣrānī and Ibn al-Wazīr and his brothers as well as his assistants. Tab., III, 1377, 1378.

enhance their power despite his successful attempt against the life of their powerful general Ītākh. Al-Mutawakkil was unable to restore the vizier to his former position or to stop the increasing power of these officers, despite the sympathy he felt towards his later viziers.¹ This was possibly due to the conflict and mistrust among the secretaries, which weakened their position.² Their intrigues to some extent encouraged the foreign officers themselves to monopolise the position of power despite obvious disagreement among the Turks.

The murder of al-Mutawakkil offered a new opportunity to the Turkish officers to exert their supreme power not only at the expense of the Caliphs, but also of the viziers, who became tools in the implementation of the former's ambitions. The earlier struggle for power between the Caliphs and their viziers which had dominated the 'Abbāsid court, seems to have shifted, and in most cases during the period under consideration, we find that the Caliphs and their viziers stood side by side against their common rivals, the army generals. This meant that the future and security of the viziers was dependent to some extent upon the Caliph's own position. Therefore the Turkish officers were the only

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1. This applied only to his attitude towards al-Fath b. Khāqān and 'Ubayd Allāh b. Yahyā but not the earlier vizier Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl al-Jurjānī. Fakhri, p. 177.
 2. The available references are to the conflict between Najāh b. Sallama, the Caliph's secretary, and other secretaries such as al-Ḥasan b. Makhḻad and Mūsā b. 'Abd al-Malik. Najāh's jealousy and envy of these latter led the Caliph in 245/859 to confiscate the property of Najāh and his son. Tab., III, 1440-43; Kamil, VII, 56-57.

courtiers who brought al-Muntaṣir to the throne. The new Caliph, whose power was usurped by these dignitaries, entrusted his secretary Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb with the vizierate.¹ Despite his stupidity and brutality,² Ibn al-Khaṣīb appears in the sources as the main policy-maker during the short reign of al-Muntaṣir,³ which was possibly due to his intimate relationship with the powerful army officers. In general this vizier seems to have been working in the interest of the officers, and always proposed policies which would be useful to them, so that they could further secure and strengthen their influence at the court. But even with his sympathetic attitude towards the Turkish officers, the vizier was not in a position to restore dignity

1. Tanbih, p. 314; Fakhri, p. 178.

2. Muruḥ, VII, 302; Sibt, IX, 262b-263a; al-Ṣafadī, II, 289-90; Fakhri, pp. 178-79.

3. a. Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb was the one who declared the official version of events, by announcing that al-Mutawakkil had been assassinated by his favourite vizier al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān, who was then immediately executed.

b. It was he who composed the oath and obliged the dignitaries to swear allegiance to the new Caliph.

c. This vizier was the dynamic power behind the removal of the two sons of al-Mutawakkil, al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad, from their right to succession.

d. Apparently his conflict with the Turkish leader Waṣīf led the Caliph to send the latter on a military campaign against Byzantium.

e. This vizier was the one who took the initiative by suggesting to the Turkish officers that they dispose of al-Muntaṣir because of the change in his attitude towards them.

to either his office or the Caliph's which must have been his main aim.¹ Al-Muntaṣir, for his part, seems to have entrusted his vizier with the direction of affairs in the capital and to have always adopted his proposals. But the Caliph's attitude did not prevent Ibn al-Khaṣīb from conspiring against his master in order to remain in office and to satisfy the powerful officers, in addition to gaining their confidence. His policy, on the other hand, did not benefit his position in the immediate future but rather encouraged the military leaders to increase their influence at the expense of both the Caliph and his vizier, who were still unable to challenge them. Thus, like his master, the vizier became a mere puppet in the hands of a few powerful army officers. The vizier's attitude towards them seemed in one way or another to be an invitation to the foreign generals to pursue their own tyrannical policy with the intention of manipulating circumstances at the court to their own ends. This therefore led directly to the degradation of the status of the viziers in the eyes of these ambitious officers.

Despite this decline in the vizier's power, he still played an important role in certain affairs at the court. For example Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb took part in the choice of the new Caliph, al-Musta'īn.² But as soon as the latter

1. D. Sourdél believes that as soon as Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb was in power he undertook to strengthen his position. Le Vizirat 'Abbāside, I, 288-89.

2. Yaqubi, III, 180; Tab., III, 1501.

ascended the throne, Ibn al-Khaṣīb seems to have been demoted from the vizierate, and according to al-Ṭabarī, the new Caliph kept him as a secretary, and conferred the title of vizier on a Turkish officer, Atāmish.¹ Shortly after, in Jummada I, 248/August 862, as a result of his conflict with certain Turkish officers, Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb was dismissed and expelled to Crete, in addition to having his property confiscated.² Muslim historians seem to have proffered various explanations of what led the Caliph to dismiss Aḥmad; al-Mas'ūdī, for instance, sees the Caliph's discontent as the sole reason for his vizier's discharge,³ while Miskawayh regards the conflict between the Mawālī and Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb as the main reason behind his dismissal.⁴ Ibn 'Abd Rabbih considers that Aḥmad's inability to carry out his responsibilities was the main pretext for the Caliph to replace him with the Turkish officer Atāmish.⁵ Ibn al-Jawzī refers to the conflict between the Caliph and his vizier and believes that this was the sole reason behind the Caliph's action.⁶

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1. Tab., III, 1502-1503; Miskawayh, VI, 562; Sibṭ, IX, 258a; cf. D. Sourdel, I, 289. But according to al-Ya'qūbī (III, 180) Ibn al-Khaṣīb remained in office as vizier for four months. Al-Mas'ūdī shares this view and states that Ibn al-Khaṣīb remained in office for a short while and later, due to the discontent of the Caliph, he was dismissed. Tanbih, p. 315.
 2. Yaqubi, III, 180; Tab., III, 1508. Al-Ya'qūbī states that shortly after his dismissal he was taken by sea to Crete and then to Qayrawān.
 3. Tanbih, p. 315.
 4. Miskawayh, VI, 564.
 5. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, al-'Iqd al-Farīd, IV, 165.
 6. Muntazam, XII, 3a.

But Šibt b. al-Jawzī emphasises the struggle for power between the Caliph and his vizier, and considers this as the main cause for the dismissal of Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb. Šibt also does not ignore the competition for supremacy between the powerful Turkish generals and the vizier, a dispute which may also have determined the Caliph's attitude towards Ibn al-Khaṣīb.¹ Our later historians do not offer any explanation which might help to solve these ambiguous circumstances, although they make references to the relegation of the vizier.² A modern Egyptian scholar has suggested that the reason al-Musta'īn dismissed his vizier was the great pressure placed on him by the powerful Turkish leaders who requested the removal of Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb from his office because of his strict financial measures.³ Since the Caliph had no power to oppose the increasing influence of his army officers, it seems more likely that the conflict between the vizier and the Turkish generals was the main reason which led the Turks to gain possession of this important post.⁴

The ousting of Ibn al-Khaṣīb from his office and the designation of Atāmish in his place was of great importance to the students of early 'Abbāsid history, simply because it shows the way that the Turks had gained influence at the 'Abbāsid court. Thus the dismissal of Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb can be considered a victory for the Turkish officers, and a

1. Sibṭ, IX, 258b.

2. Arbīlī, p. 229; TBN, fol. 64b.

3. M.H. Aḥmad, al-Khilāfa wa al-Dawla fī al-‘Asr al-‘Abbāsī, Cairo, 1959, p. 109.

4. Yaqubī, III, 180.

turning point in the decline of the office of vizier as a position of civil authority, because it fell under the control of a soldier who had no experience in the administration of such an institution. Hence, all the important offices at the court came under the direct control of the powerful army officers. But despite the transference of this office to the hands of the Turkish generals, it did not help to restore its dignity and subsequent events show how little respect this office now commanded. Atāmish did not remain long in practising such undisputed authority at the court.¹ He was murdered at the hands of the rival Turkish officers who were encouraged by the angry Turkish mercenaries, as well as by the Caliph al-Musta'īn who intended to strengthen his own position and to eliminate the influence of such dignitaries.² Thus, the murder of Atāmish seems to have adversely affected the status of this office, which then sank in people's estimation even lower than before. Although on this particular occasion the struggle for power was part of the conflict between the Caliph and the Turkish generals, the latter seem to have been aware of the situation. Therefore, there remained no respect for the vizierate in the eyes of the avaricious military leaders, who were ready to challenge any power which attempted to stand in the way of their ever expanding authority.

1. Cf. Fakhri, p. 180 where Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaḡā does not mention Atāmish as a vizier of the Caliph. He states that as soon as Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb was discharged al-Musta'īn appointed Sālih b. Yazdād to the vizierate.

2. Tab., III, 1512-13.

This decline in the vizier's authority could not be attributed merely to the strength of the opposition, but also to the jealousy and envy among the secretaries themselves.¹ It must be remembered too that the court concentrated mainly on obtaining money to pay the soldiers, and on the expenses of the palace. The easiest way to do this was to confiscate the property of wealthy dignitaries, such as the viziers and the secretaries.² It is worth noting that the Turkish officers did not continue to hold the vizierate despite its significance in the retention of their supremacy. This can be interpreted as an attempt by the generals to avoid any possible dispute among themselves which might have led to their own downfall. They probably believed that if one of their compatriots continued in this position he would provoke the jealousy and hatred of the others and this would lead to direct conflict among them. Therefore, it was a much more secure and a safer policy if they brought a person whom they trusted to this office, and used him as a means to fulfil their own ambitions.

Ṣalīḥ b. Yazdād, who succeeded Atāmish, had failed in his intention of restoring his office to its former dignity by imposing certain financial measures on the Turkish officers

1. Atāmish's secretary Shujā' b. al-Qāsim intended to eliminate the former secretaries who had remained in office as, for instance, Aḥmad b. Isrā'īl at the land tax office and al-Ḥasan b. Makhḻad at the state properties office. The latter was replaced by his substitute 'Īsā b. Farkhānshāh and was ordered to leave Samarra within three days. Tanūkhī, Faraj, I, 135; cf. D. Sourdcl, I, 290-91.

2. M.D. al-Rayīs, p. 82.

when he tried to curtail the expenditure of the officers by controlling their payment.¹ In adopting such a policy the vizier provoked the anger of the powerful generals who decided to take a determined stand against him. Then, under pressure from the opposition, in particular Bughā al-Ṣaghīr, who was the main authority at that time, Ibn Yazdād fled to Baghdad in Sha'bān 249/October 863.² This indicates that the vizier had no power to implement his intention of improving the deteriorating situation in the capital, since whenever this policy came into conflict with that of the Turks he was exposed to various forms of retribution from them. Therefore, in order to secure his position and to maintain his authority, the vizier was compelled to carry out and serve the interests of the Turks. In complying with the officers, however, the vizier sometimes acted against the will of the secretaries,³ an act which only further encouraged the

1. Fakhri, p. 180.

2. Tab., III, 1514; Ibar, III, 284; Ibn al-Abbār (fol. 77b) mentions that Ibn Yazdād fled to Baghdad because of his insecure future among the Turks who bitterly hated him for his tyrannical policies. Ibn al-Taṭṭaṭā shares the same view and emphasises that the threat on his life was the sole reason which had led him to flee to Baghdad. Moreover, the latter considers that this threat came from umarā' al-dawla. Fakhri, pp. 180-81.

3. According to one anecdote, Ibn Yazdād persecuted a certain Abū Ayyūb who had been supported by the former vizier 'Ubayd Allāh b. Yaḥyā. Tanūkhī, Faraj, Ms. Paris Or. 3483, 23a; cf. D. Sourdél, I, 292. On the other hand Ibn Yazdād would have replaced al-Faḍl b. Marwān at the tax office by 'Isā b. Farkhānshāh who thus extended his influence. Tab., III, 1514.

generals to exercise their authority.

The successor of Ibn Yazdād seems to have been Muḥammad b. Faḍl al-Jūrjānī,¹ the former vizier of al-Mutawakkil, who did not stay very long in office, as he died during the year 250/864.² Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaḡā clearly states that Muḥammad b. Faḍl and his successor, Shujā' b. al-Qasīm³ were appointed as secretaries, kuttāb, and nobody called himself by the name 'vizier'.⁴ This was probably due to the strong influence of the Turkish officers which adversely affected the position of the vizier. It must be remembered that the situation of the vizierate was no better than that of the Caliphate during this period, in comparison with the life and power of the army officers.

Ibn al-Abbār states that Ibn Yazdād returned to the vizierate for a second time after Shujā' b. al-Qāsim and remained in office until the end of al-Musta'īn's reign,⁵ while al-Mas'ūdī believes that Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ b. Shīrzād was the last vizier.⁶ Since Ibn Shīrzād was the secretary of Waṣīf, who became the director of affairs in Ramaḍān 250/October 864, and had at his disposal the seal of the Caliph and controlled the vizierate,⁷ one can easily under-

1. It was said that the successor was either Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ b. Shīrzād or Aḥmad b. Isrā'īl. TBN, fol. 64b.

2. Kamil, VII, 89.

3. But according to al-Ṭabarī, (III, 1512-13) Shujā' b. al-Qasīm was murdered together with his master Atāmish.

4. Fakhri, p. 180.

5. Ibn al-Abbār, fol. 77b.

6. Tanbih, p. 315.

7. Tab., III, 1531.

stand how this personal secretary may have considered himself a vizier.¹ But this happened during the second siege of Baghdad when al-Musta'īn's power was moving into its decline.

As many different individuals held the office of vizier during this reign, there remained no respect for him even in the eyes of the common people. The army generals on the other hand were pleased at these changes in office because it helped them to maintain their supremacy. It also proved the futility of the institution as an aid to implementing or adopting any policy intended to maintain peace and order in the capital, or even to help in restoring the equilibrium.

As soon as al-Mu'tazz came to the throne, he reluctantly nominated Ja'far b. Maḥmūd al-Iskāfī as his vizier. In order to secure his position, the latter lavished many gifts on the Turks, but this policy led to his immediate downfall.² The vizier's generosity, however, widened the rift among the Turks who separated into two distinct groups, one for, and one against, the vizier. Therefore, when the struggle for power between the two led to a riot, this offered the Caliph al-Mu'tazz the opportunity to dismiss his vizier whom he disliked. It is clearly stated that from the very beginning the Caliph hated this vizier;³ but probably under pressure from his Turkish officers, he had been obliged to designate

1. D. Sourdel, I, 293-94.

2. Fakhri, p. 181; D. Sourdel, I, 294-95.

3. Fakhri, p. 181.

وطاهر المعتز بكرهه وكانوا يسيرونه الى النشيع

al-Iskāfī to the vizierate.¹

The Turks succeeded in removing Ja'far b. Maḥmūd al-Iskāfī from his post, and replaced him by 'Īsā b. Farūkhānshāh who also remained in office only for a short time.² Hence al-Mu'tazz appointed his favourite secretary Aḥmad b. Isrā'īl instead.³ The aim of al-Mu'tazz was indeed to rid himself of both Waṣīf and Bughā al-Ṣaghīr, but on meeting opposition from his brothers al-Mu'ayyad and Abū Aḥmad al-Muwaffaq, as well as the Turkish mercenaries the Caliph was unable to do this. He may have intended to strengthen the position of the secretaries at court by gradually excluding Turkish influence. This can be seen not only in the designation of Ibn Isrā'īl to the vizierate but also in the extensive power bestowed on other secretaries.⁴

It is worth noting that the vizier now became completely dependent on the Caliph himself. Their positions were

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1. It was reported that Sīmā al-Sharābī was the real director of affairs at the court. Sīmā was responsible for the post office and for controlling the dīwān of the Turkish army, through his secretary Abū 'Umar. Tab., III, 1550; cf. D. Sourdél, I, 295.
 2. The discharged vizier 'Īsā had been badly treated by the Turks. Tab., III, 1680-81.
 3. In 252/866 Aḥmad b. Isrā'īl officially became vizier. Tab., III, 1647; Kamil, VII, 122. Al-Ṭabarī, (III, 1640) states that Aḥmad b. Isrā'īl received from al-Mu'tazz during the vizierate of al-Iskāfī control of the post office and obtained an assurance that he would be appointed vizier.
 4. It is reported that immediately after the murder of Bughā al-Ṣaghīr his son Mūsā received an extended favour from the Caliph, and his secretary Sa'īd b. Makhlad became almost as powerful as a vizier. Nishwār, VIII, 45-48; cf. D. Sourdél, I, 297.

interdependent: whenever the vizier was in a strong position so was the Caliph, and vice-versa. This indicates that both the Caliph and his vizier always stood against their common enemy, the Turkish officers, who intended to usurp as much power as possible. The position of the Caliph and his vizier seems to have been more favourable at the beginning of the reign of al-Mu'tazz than during the previous two reigns. But as a consequence of the struggle between the Caliph and his vizier, on one side, against the foreign army generals, on the other, the situation had completely changed by the close of this reign.¹

In Jumāda II, 255/June 869, Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf, the powerful Turkish leader, succeeded in having the three most important assistants of the Caliph imprisoned² against the will of the Caliph and his family. This imprisonment represented a real victory for the Turkish officers and a decline in the vizier's power. The conflict among the secretaries had played its part in encouraging the army leaders to exercise their power not only against the vizier and the scribes but also against the Caliph himself.³ As

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1. Cf. D. Sourdel, I, 296 who believes that Ibn Isrā'īl did not play an important part either in the political life of the time or in the efforts made by the Caliph to take revenge on the Turkish officers.
 2. They were Aḥmad b. Isrā'īl, al-Ḥasan b. Makhḻad and Abū Nūḥ 'Īsā b. Ibrāhīm. Tab., III, 1706; Kāmil, VII, 148; cf. Yaqubi, III, 187 where he states that they were Aḥmad b. Isrā'īl, al-Ḥasan b. Makhḻad, 'Īsā b. Ibrāhīm and 'Alī b. Nūḥ.
 3. Tab., (III, 1724) clearly states that 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Yazdād was the one who encouraged Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf to punish the secretaries.

a consequence Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf and his followers succeeded in imposing their wills on the Caliph, forcing him to accept Ja'far b. Maḥmūd al-Iskāfī as vizier, despite al-Mu'tazz's hatred of him. The Caliph, who had intended to nominate Ṣāliḥ b. Yazdād, submitted to their power and granted al-Iskāfī full authority as his vizier.¹

The installation of Ja'far b. Maḥmūd to the vizierate for a second time was of great importance, because it showed how degraded the position of the vizier was in the eyes of the army leaders. The vizier became a mere tool in their hands and, in accordance with their own desire, they invested whom they wanted with this office.² This meant that the vizier was unable to exercise any authority, and if he wished to retain his post he had to obey the army officers.³ Moreover, al-Iskāfī himself resigned from the vizierate because of heavy pressure from the powerful leaders whom he was now compelled to obey since he had been chosen by them. Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf became the real power and master at the court and even letter headings were written in his name.⁴

1. Tab., III, 1707, 1709; cf. Fakhri, p. 182 where he does not refer to the attempt made by al-Mu'tazz to appoint Ibn Yazdād, but simply states that al-Iskāfī was nominated by Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf and designated to the vizierate.

2. H.A. Maḥmūd, al-Islam wa al-Ḥaḍāra al-'Arabiyya, Cairo, 1968, p. 59.

3. As a result of the vizier's humiliation the following was a popular song.

يا نضر لا تزلزل بنيتي .. وعلى القلب بالواجب
وانتظري يا قد رأيت ما فيه الله اي حبيب بن محمود

Fakhri, p. 182.

4. Tanbih, p. 317.

وكانت الكتب تخرج باسم صالح بن وصيف وطأه برجم بالوزارة فكتبه على الراس
also Muruj, VII, 379.
وغلب على أسرته وصرفه سلطانه

It seems that Ja'far b. Maḥmūd al-Iskāfī continued in his vizierate during the early period of al-Muhtadī's reign.¹ Shortly after, he was succeeded by Sulaymān b. Wahb and, according to certain sources, the latter remained in office until the end of the reign.² But despite the designation of Sulaymān to the vizierate, neither the Caliph nor his vizier was able to restore the former dignity of their own offices, which had now been taken over by a few powerful Turkish officers. Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf, and later Bāykabāk, continued to dominate the affairs of the court. The vizier on the other hand seems to have had no part in directing affairs during the short reign of this Caliph but was concerned only with fulfilling his masters' commands.

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1. Fakhri, p. 183; al-Mas'ūdī states that despite the brevity of this Caliph's reign, several changes took place among the viziers who included Ja'far b. Maḥmūd al-Iskāfī, Ibn 'Ammār and Sulaymān b. Wahb. Tanbih, p. 318. The author of TBN, believes that 'Abd Allāh b. Yazdād was the first vizier, succeeded by Abū Ṣāliḥ b. 'Imād and Sulaymān b. Wahb respectively, fol. 65b, though Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, (X, 9a) mentions that Ibn Yazdād became a vizier during this reign but only after Sulaymān b. Wahb and Ja'far b. Maḥmūd. The role of Ibn Hazdād during the early rule of al-Muhtadī (Tab., III, 1816, 1822, 1830) led A.H. Herzfeld (Samarra, p. 255) and later D. Sourdel, (I, 300) to infer that Ibn Yazdād had been a vizier during this period.
 2. Aghani, XX, 67; Tanbih, p. 318; TBN, fol. 65b; Fakhri, p. 186; cf. Muruj, VIII, 2, where Sulaymān who, according to al-Ṭabarī, was very close to the Caliph, during the riots which were to bring about his deposition, was by then playing the 'part of a vizier'. Tab., III, 1624-25. But it has been suggested that the expression used to refer to him shows that he did not actually hold this title. Cf. D. Sourdel, I, 303.

In spite of al-Muhtadī's and his vizier's; attempts to improve the status of the vizierate, during his reign it underwent a distinct decline. It was the Turkish officers who 'made' and 'unmade' both viziers and Caliph alike, and one can see on several occasions one of the officers having invested himself as a regent of the Empire, eventually being given the title of vizier, as was the case with Atāmish, and some such as Ṣālih b. Waṣīf were given the prerogatives of a vizier.

The secretaries who were linked with the military officers on certain occasions, and through them afterwards had access to the service of the Caliph, had only temporary influence and very limited powers which were liable to disappear as soon as the power of their direct master dwindled.¹

During this short bewildering period of the struggle for power, it seems that the Caliphate's and the vizierate's situations were closely linked to each other and the decline of one meant the collapse of the other. This was due mainly to the vigorous policy of the Turkish officers who intended, in spite of their disunity, to suppress any power which could possibly stand in the way of their supremacy.² However, immediately after this period, the struggle between the Caliph and his vizier was renewed because of the suppression of power among the army officers who were the common enemy of

1. D. Sourdel, I, 303-304.

2. Ibn al-Mu'tazz, pp. 82-83.

both the viziers and the Caliphs. With the decline of the generals, the Caliph and his vizier initiated the struggle for power between themselves as each tried to extend his authority at the expense of the other.¹

1. It is reported that in 264/877 the Caliph al-Mu'tamid confiscated the property of his vizier Sulaymān b. Wahb and his family because of the increasing power of the latter. Tab., III, 1926-27. In 265/878 the Caliph's brother al-Muwaffaq ordered the appropriation of the property of his vizier and his son. Tab., III, 1930; TBN, fol. 104a.

CHAPTER V

THE TURKISH SOLDIERY IN SAMARRA¹The Introduction of the Turks into the 'Abbāsid Army.

There is definite evidence that Turkish soldiers had been employed in the Caliph's bodyguard since the reign of the Caliph al-Mansūr,² and this cannot be regarded as an exceptional circumstance in a society which was composed of various ethnic groups.³ At the outset of his conflict with his brother al-Amīn, al-Ma'mūn intended to seek refuge with the Khāqān of the Turks, but his adviser Faḍl b. Sahl persuaded him to remain in Khurāsān.⁴ Many Turkish soldiers were used against al-Amīn during the civil war, and from this time their

1. The term 'Turkish soldiery' is used to denote the new military recruits who were brought into the Muslim army about the end of the first century of the 'Abbāsid dynasty, most of whom were from the nomads of Central Asia. EI¹, s.v. Turks; cf. Osman S.A. Ismail, "Mu'taṣim and the Turks," pp. 14-15. In this study these soldiers will be treated as a separate body from their leaders who in certain cases used them as means to fulfil their own ambitions.
2. Tha'ālibī, Latā'if al-Ma'ārif, p. 20; Ibn Badrūn, p. 292; Ibn al-Faqīh, Kitāb al-Buldān, p. 282; Qalqashandī, Ma'āthir al-Ināfa fī Ma'ālim al-Khilāfa, vol. III, Kuwait, 1964, 347. Ibn Badrūn and Tha'ālibī make clear that it was al-Mansūr who first introduced Turks into the service of the 'Abbāsid state. This possibly refers to the position of Hammād al-Turkī at the court of this Caliph.
3. W.M. Watt, Islam and the Integration of Society, London, 1966, p. 114. Professor Watt sees this creation of an ethnic diversity as one of the outstanding achievements of Islam.
4. Tab., III, 802, 814; cf. Ibar, III, 232. If he lost the battle with his brother, al-Ma'mūn intended to take refuge with the king of the Turks.

numbers in the 'Abbāsid army continued to increase steadily,¹ being estimated at three thousand during al-Mu'tasim's expedition to Miṣr in 214/829-30.²

It is usually maintained that the large-scale recruitment which began under al-Ma'mūn was motivated by the desire to create a third force in the military establishment which could hold the balance between Arabs and Persians.³ And it is even suggested that already at this time these troops were made a part of the regular army, were enrolled in the dīwān, and drew their salaries from the central treasury.⁴ Although they may have been originally conceived as such a third force, in the event, their recruitment was to displace the Arab element in the military establishment; and it might with equal force be suggested that this, in fact, was the true intention of al-Ma'mūn, who felt he could no longer trust those Arabs who had fought against his cause in the civil war.⁵

The Turkish soldiers, most of whom had been introduced into the Caliph's army through the agency of 'Abd Allāh b.

1. Tab., III, 891.

2. Yaqubi, Buldan, p. 30; Al-Kindī put their number at four thousand. Kindī, p. 188.

3. C. Brockelmann stresses this point, stating that the rivalry between the Arabs and the Persians to whom al-Ma'mūn in the first years of his reign had shown special favour, had already compelled him to entrust his personal security to a group of slaves, principally Turks. p.129; Anwar G. Chejne, p. 118, seems to share this view.

4. Osman S.A. Ismail, p. 16, puts forward this suggestion, but there is no explicit statement in any of the authorities that the Turks were given such official status at this period.

5. As soon as al-Mu'tasim ascended the throne he sent a letter to Kaydar, the governor of Egypt, informing him
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Tāhir and the Sāmānid Nūh b. Asad, had the status of slaves and some of them were actually the currency in which the tribute from the north-eastern provinces was paid.¹ As the need for them increased, arrangements for their supply were made with the local rulers of the regions of Samarqand, Farghāna and Shāsh until ultimately they came to form bulk of al-Mu'tasim's troops.²

Although it is usual for modern historians to place the blame for the infection of the body politic of Islam on this virus of an irresponsible slave soldiery on al-

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of his election and ordering him to drop the names of the Arabs from the dīwān and to stop their pay. Kindi, p. 143; Khitat, I, 94, 311, 313. Al-Maqrīzī, al-Nizā' wa al-Takhāṣum, Najaf, 1386 A.H., p. 63, states that al-Mu'tasim ousted the Arabs, the Prophet's people, with whom God established the Muslim religion, from the dīwān, and stopped their pay.

1. Before becoming Caliph, al-Mu'tasim used to send a certain Ja'far al-Khushshakī every year to Nūh b. Asad al-Sāmānī in Samarqand to buy the Turks. Yaqubi, Buldan, p. 24.
2. D. Ayalon, "The Military Reforms of Caliph al-Mu'tasim", p. 26, holds that the importance of the Sāmānids lay in the fact that they had been, since the days of al-Ma'mūn, the main channel through which Mamlūks were brought into the Muslim world, a view already expressed by W. Barthold, Turkistan down to the Mongol invasion, London, 1968, pp. 209-211.

Mu'tasim,¹ all that can actually be said against him is that he continued the policy of his predecessors to the lengths which he thought were desirable.² The primary duty of the slave troops was to act as palace guards,³ and it must be remembered that not all of them were Turks, and that negroes and maghāriba slaves were also employed for this purpose in the early period.⁴ In regard to those elements which were brought from the Eastern provinces, from beyond Khurāsān and Transoxania, there are sufficient references to their lands or origin to show that the name "Turk" was used indiscriminately.⁵ Thus it is beyond the scope of the study to go into details of such issues because this essay focuses only on the situation of the Turkish mercenaries in the Capital.

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1. For example, M.K. 'Alī, Khitat al-shām, Damascus, I, 1343/1925, 196; A.A. al-Dūrī, al-'Asr al-'Abbāsī al-Awal, Baghdad, 1945, p. 229; M. Canard, "Byzantium and the Muslim World to the Middle of the ELEVENTH Century," CMH, IV, 1966, p. 701. They all draw the conclusion that the fundamental cause for the decay of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate lay in the introduction of these Turkish Troops during the reign of al-Mu'tasim.
 2. Such large-scale importation of these mercenaries was made possible by the final subjugation and Islamisation of Transoxania and its neighbouring areas, which took place in the reign of al-Ma'mūn and al-Mu'tasim. Balādhurī, Futūh al-Buldān, Beirut, 1377/1958, p. 431; cf. D. Ayalon, p. 29; W. Barthold, p. 210.
 3. Muruj, VII, 118-119.
 4. Muruj, VII, 118; Tanbih, p. 306; cf. Osman S.A. Ismail, p. 14.
 5. Balādhurī, p. 606; Yaqubī, Buldan, pp. 29-33; Manaqib, pp. 9-15; Muruj, VII, 118; Kamil, VI, 319; Ibar, III, 357.

The Special position of the Slave Troops

There were various factors which led al-Mu'taṣim to place his trust in the new troops more than the permanent groups of the army. The cleavage in the military establishment of the Empire which had resulted from the civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn had never been healed, and the antagonism between the old Arab faction and the new Muslims in other spheres of social activity was reflected in the army. Although al-Ma'mūn had shown himself a partisan of the non-Arab cause, his position as Caliph was made ambiguous by the dichotomy of the peoples over whom he ruled. It became desirable, in these circumstances, to bring in an uncommitted third element, the loyalty of which would not be influenced by these partisan feelings. This, like so many others of al-Ma'mūn's policies, was continued by al-Mu'taṣim, and the increasing intensity of the factional strivings in the Empire led him to increase the numbers of slaves, and to seek his own personal security in the strength which they held in comparison to that of the other troops.¹

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1. R. Levy, Social Structure of Islam, p. 417, quoting from al-Ṭabarī, III, 1164, relates that on the accession of the Caliph al-Mu'taṣim in 218/833, the Persian jund in Baghdad rose in favour of his nephew al-Abbās, but the latter himself acknowledged al-Mu'taṣim and was thus able to quell the disturbance. Cf. Yaqubi, III, 163, where it is mentioned that a few leaders refused to acknowledge al-Mu'taṣim as Caliph. The new Caliph, however, continued to be distrustful of the indigenous army and by purchase and other means recruited a large force of men originating from the Turkish-speaking provinces of Eastern Persia and Transoxania. From the 9th Century onwards this enlargement of the slave-army continued at an ever-increasing pace. C. Cahen, "The Turkish Invasion", Setton and Baldwin, A History of the Crusades, I, 136. /m

The Turks, of course, would have no fixed position in the Mu'tazilite controversy which was destroying the social life of the Capital, and this neutrality was a further inducement to al-Mu'taṣim to look upon them as the only quarter from which he could expect undivided loyalty.¹ It would be very naïve to accept the view that the Caliph was building up this army to fight the Byzantines,² or to assist the propagation of Islam.³ Whenever they were used outside the Capital it was invariably to suppress opposition to the Caliph's authority,⁴ and in later periods when they were found fighting on the Byzantine frontiers it was always as bands of adventurers seeking booty not available for them in the Capital.

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1. Nu'mān Thābit, Al-Jundiyya fī al-Dawlat al-'Abbāsiyya, Baghdad, 1956, p. 207.
 2. K.A.G. Creswell, A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture, London, 1958, p. 259. He sees the war on the Byzantine frontiers as the main reason for recruiting these Turks. He states, "al-Ma'mūn carried on campaigns against the Byzantine Empire and for this purpose he imported several thousand Turks every year from central Asia."
 3. Osman S.A. Ismail notes that the Islam which these Turks adopted was that which later came to be called Sunnī Islam in which the spirit of jihād is assumed to have suited their nature. "Mu'taṣim and the Turks," p. 19.
 4. Yaqubi, III, 164-166; Tab., III, 1165 ff.; Ṭayfūr, p. 80; cf. Von Kremer, p. 340. In the most recent work dealing with this subject, D. Ayalon emphasises the position of the Turkish mercenaries as assuring the protection of the Caliph. D. Ayalon, "The Military Reforms of Caliph al-Mu'taṣim", p. 26.

The family ties which linked al-Mu'taṣim with the Turks through his mother, Mārīda, whom some believe to have been a Turkish slave, may have had some effect on the increasing recruitment of these troops in the army.¹ Moreover the Turks did have outstanding qualities of bravery and manliness that would have recommended them to anyone such as the Caliph who stood in need of a new military force to preserve himself and his authority.²

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1. Yaqubi, III, 164; Tab., III, 1329; Muruj, VII, 107; Tanbih, p. 305; Kutubi, II, 533; Ibn Kathir, X, 297; al-Dūrī, Dirāsāt fī al-'Uṣūr al-'Abbāsiyya al-Muta'akhkhira Baghdad, 1954, p. 228; cf. Osman S.A. Ismail "Mu'taṣim and the Turks", p. 19. The latter argues against Professor al-Dūrī's inferences concerning the origin of the Caliph's mother. Osman claims that she was not of a Turkish origin, but he offers no argument for this.
2. Manaqib, p. 36 ff.; Tanbih, p. 305; Ibn Ḥawqal, Kitāb al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik, p. 448; al-Iṣṭakhrī, Kitāb al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik, p. 291.

A. The Attitudes of the Caliphs towards the Turkish soldiery until the reign of al-Muntasir

An assessment of the position of the Turkish mercenaries in the Capital in the light of the attitude of the Caliphs towards them on the one hand and their co-operation with the 'Abbāsids on the other should be preliminary to any statement on the political life of the Caliphate in this period. Von Kremer states that to the three divisions of the south Arabian, the north Arabian and the Khurāsānian troops which formed the 'Abbāsīd army, a fourth was added under al-Mu'tasim which very soon became the most dangerous.¹ The special position accorded to these new troops was indicated by the style in which al-Mu'tasim clothed them, in damask with golden girdles and various kinds of gold ornaments. These were the troops he took with him as his personal bodyguard when the Capital was transferred to Samarra, probably hoping to isolate them from the intrigues and seductions of Baghdad.² The non-Turkish military groups that came to Samarra with him were ordered to settle in their own special quarters of the city, each of which was made self-sufficient in such facilities as markets, mosques and baths.³ In this favoured position, the Turkish slave-

1. Von Kremer, p. 340.

2. Muruj, VII, 118; Suyūṭī, p. 335; Nujum, II, 233.

3. Yaqubi, Buldan, p. 33; cf. Von Grunebaum, Islam, London, 1969, p. 147; E. Herzfeld, Geschichte der Stadt Samarra, Hamburg, 1948, pp. 97-99. Both Von Grunebaum and Herzfeld state that the farāghina and the Turks lived together in one district, but this was not in agreement with what al-Ya'qūbī records.

troops began to regard themselves as an elite section of the community, and al-Mu'taṣim encouraged them in this belief by lavish praise of their leaders. To a certain extent he did receive loyal and devoted service from them, and as a temporary expedient his policies can be said to have been successful.

The number of these Turkish troops, in the reign of this Caliph, is not stated explicitly in any of the contemporary sources. Al-Mas'ūdī, however, puts their number at seventy thousand, including the slaves from Sughd, Farghāna, Ushrūsana and Shāsh, in addition to the Arab maghāribā.¹ Ibn Kathīr, (X, 296), mentions the improbably low figure of twenty thousand, without specifying their various origins, but this is wholly at odds with the statement of al-Ya'qūbī (Buldān, p. 30) that by the time of al-Ma'mūn the Turks alone numbered thirty thousand. How confused the available information is, may be judged by the fact that al-Ṭabarī records that in the year 234/899 - only seven years after the death of al-Mu'taṣim - two hundred thousand Turkish horsemen were sent to suppress the revolt of Muḥammad b. al-Ba'ith.²

At his accession al-Mutawakkil granted 'atā'³ of eight

1. Muruj, VII, 168.

2. Tab., III, 1381.

3. 'Atā', "gift", is the term most commonly used in the early days of Islam to describe the pensions of the Muslims; later it designated the pay of troops. EI², s.v. 'Atā'. In the period under consideration, the term seems to have only the meaning of an occasional gift to the soldiers.

months to pay to the jund, and from the statement of al-Tabarī it would appear that this was in the form of rizq. The shākiriyya and the Hāshimites, also, received eight months rizq, while the Turks received four and the maghāriba only three.¹ The latter resented this discrimination and refused to accept what they had been offered. The Caliph instructed Ibn Abī Dū'ād and Waṣīf to settle the matter, proposing that those individuals in the group who were of free-man status should be incorporated entirely into the jund, while those of slave-status should be put up for sale. However Waṣīf prevented so drastic a solution to the problem and he persuaded the maghāriba to accept what had been offered on this one occasion, on the understanding that in the future they would receive equal treatment with the Turks.²

It was al-Mutawakkil's intention to free himself and the Caliphate from the position of dependence on the Turkish slave troops which his predecessors had allowed to develop, and in order to achieve this he had to run the risk of incurring their hostility, by showing favouritism to the soldiers of the jund and the shākiriyya. This discrimination in favour of the non-Turks can be seen as an attempt to restore the traditional military establishment to its former pre-eminence in the state and thereby, to provide a stable foundation for his own power.

Thus, the reign of al-Mutawakkil saw the growth of the irregular military formations being paralleled by an increase

1. Cf. EI², s.v. Djund. D. Sourdél is in error in thinking that the Turkish troops formed part of the jund at this time.

2. Tab., III, 1369-70.

in the standing army of the state, al-Mutawakkil's intention being to provide a counterbalance to the inequality in the military power which had mushroomed almost unnoticed in the heart of the Empire.¹ He ordered all the slave troops to change their uniforms, and henceforth to wear brown cloaks; they were also to carry their swords - not according to the old Arabian custom, with a shoulder belt - but in the Persian fashion, buckled round the waist.² The dīwān al-mawālī wa al-ghilmān³ was created so that the Caliph could keep himself informed of their numbers and status, and control and manipulate them when they tended to become troublesome. Al-Mas'ūdī sees all this as a deliberate attempt on the part of the Caliph to impress his authority on the Turks, adding that he also expelled some from the army and reduced the pay of others. A new corps of soldiers consisting of Arabs and sa'ālīk (vagabonds) was formed to compensate for the envisaged reductions in the Turkish contingents, and this was placed under the command of

1. Tab., III, 1431-32, 1434. The standing army, according to al-Jāhiz, comprised divisions of Arabs, Turks, mawālī, Khurāsānī and abnā', Manaqib, I, 9. The historians corroborate this: Tab., III, 1369-70, 1380-84, 1385-86, 1400, 1431; Muruj, VII, 258, 273-77; Ibar, III, 276. They also include the ghilmān, the shākiriyya, the farāghina, the ushrūsaniyya, the zawāqīl and sa'ālīk.
2. Von Kremer, p. 345, quotes Ibar, III, 275.
3. Yaqubi, Buldan, p. 23. The dīwān al-jund came to be known during this period as dīwān al-jund wa al-shākiriyya, probably with the purpose of distinguishing those registered therein from the Turkish mercenaries. Cf. Dūrī, al-Nuzum al-Islāmiyya, Baghdad, 1950, p. 201.

'Ubayd Allāh b. Khāqān and the Prince al-Mu'tazz.¹ In Samarra, the Caliph made grants of iqtā' only to slaves from Farghāna and Ushrūsana, deliberately ignoring the Turkish ghilmān and mawālī.²

Al-Mutawakkil appears to have planned to stir up the Shī'a against the Turks and to play one off against the other, his ultimate aim being to curb them both. Thus he assigned almost all of his anti-Shī'a measures to the Turkish mercenaries.³ For example, it was a band of Turkish soldiers that was sent to fetch the Imām 'Alī al-Naqī from his house and bring him before the Caliph.⁴ Yazīd b. 'Abd Allāh al-Turkī, the governor of Egypt, under instructions from Samarra, adopted a harsh policy against the 'Alids living there.⁵ In 244/858, Ya'qūb b. al-Sikkīt, the tutor of the Caliph's sons, who had shown sympathy towards the 'Alids, was murdered by al-Mutawakkil's Turkish bodyguards.⁶

1. Tanbih, p. 313.

2. Yaqubi, Buldan, p. 37; cf. Muruj, VII, 273.

3. N. Abbott, "Arabic papyri of the Reign of Ġa'far al-Mutawakkil", p. 90.

4. Muruj, VII, 2-7.

5. Kindi, p. 203; Nujum, II, 309; B.K. al-Tikritī, p. 67. Yazīd b. 'Abd Allāh is said to have pursued the extremists among the Shī'a in Egypt, interrogating and punishing those whom he caught. He executed their leaders and sent a group of them to Iraq under terrible conditions. He then turned his attention to the 'Alids in general and inflicted severe punishment on them before they were driven from Egypt.

6. Suyūṭī, pp. 348-49; Nujum, II, 285.

It must be remembered that although the Caliph had succeeded in suppressing the 'Alids he did not achieve his second objective which was to restore 'Abbāsid dignity by eliminating the power of the Turkish slave army.

Subsequently, the Caliph's policy towards the Turks prompted him to move his capital from Samarra to Damascus, intending thereby to seek the support of the Arabs in Syria and the surrounding provinces as a counter-balance to these insolent praetorians.¹ If he had succeeded in winning the Arabs over to his cause he would have reasserted the supremacy of his family. But, aware of the Caliph's plan, the Turkish soldiers of Samarra rose up in protest against his transference of the seat of power, and when al-Mutawakkil learned of the troubles this had caused he abandoned his plan and returned to Iraq on the pretext that Damascus was not a healthy place in which to settle.² Although the Caliph surrendered to the demands of the Turkish soldiers in this matter, he did not re-establish Samarra as his Capital, but constructed another garrison to the north of the city called Ja'fariyya or Māhūza, and made this his residence.³

It is worth noting that al-Mutawakkil's religious policy could be considered as one aspect of his anti-Turkish policy.⁴ The Caliph found himself in a vexing situation.

1. S.F. Mahmud, A short History of Islam, Oxford, 1965, p.137.

2. Yaqubi, III, 177; Tab., III, 1435, 1436-37.

3. Yaqubi, III, 177; Yaqubi, Buldan, pp.41-42; Tab., III, 1438-39.

4. B.K. al-Tikritī, pp. 53-54.

His immediate predecessors had been forced to call on the Turks to protect them from subjects who resented their religious views.¹ This Caliph, however, returned to the policy of the pre-al-Ma'mūn period, i.e. adopted the Sunna of the Prophet as an official doctrine of the state. Therefore his religious policy obliged him, not from a theological point of view but rather from a political one, to stand against the Turkish mercenaries so that he would be able to bring the masses to his side.²

The behaviour of al-Mutawakkil can be seen as an attempt to restore the balance of military power in the Empire to its former position, with the Caliphate as the focus of its activities. But in this he was impeded not only by the magnitude of such a reconstruction, but also by the intrigues within his own family. His eldest son al-Muntaṣir exploited all the feelings of grievance which his father's policies had created among the Turks to further his own ambitions.³ Although the lack of solidarity among the Turks and their mutual jealousies and rivalries should have facilitated their elimination from a position of overwhelming power, the disunity within the 'Abbāsid family itself was equally as great, and the one can be seen as balancing out the other.

1. H. Bowen, The life and time of 'Alī b. 'Īsā, Cambridge, 1928, p. 3.

2. W.M. Watt, Islamic Political Thought, p. 89.

3. Muruḡ, VII, 273.

B. The Position of the Turkish soldiers between 247-255/
861-869.

From the previous section one can easily see the increasing power of the Turkish mercenaries despite al-Mutawakkil's intolerant attitude towards them. The murder of al-Mutawakkil was, in effect, a triumph for the foreign elements in the army, proof indeed that the Turks were now the real power in the lands of the Caliphate. The power of the mercenaries lay in the solidarity imposed upon them by the fact of their being foreigners in Samarra; and, however great may have been the forces operating to fragment their unity, there was a basic awareness that their very survival demanded that they should present a united front against all those not of their race. Their loyalty to their leaders arose from the feelings of insecurity they must have experienced whenever they stepped outside the confines of the barracks and the camp where they could feel at ease among men of their own kind, and the commanding officer of each group was probably regarded as a providing and protecting father-figure. It was when they had become more familiar with the life surrounding them that they were susceptible to other appeals; it was then that the power they had formerly exercised dwindled away and was lost.

During his short reign, al-Muntasir was brought to the realization of what an outrage, such as the murder of his father, implied for the state and for himself, and, as al-Mas'ūdī observes, he decided to eliminate this threat by removing the menacing presence of the Turks by whatever means

possible. The campaign led by Waṣīf against the Byzantines in 248/862 had no other motive than to rid the Capital of them.¹ Al-Ṭabarī, in his account of the origins of the campaign, would appear to reduce the cause to the hostility between the Caliph's vizier, Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb, and Waṣīf, but from the details which follow it emerges that it was not merely Waṣīf that Aḥmad sought to get rid of but the Turks as a whole, and he could see no other way of doing this other than sending them to war on the frontiers.² Later historians agree with the interpretation of al-Mas'ūdī.³ Ibn Kathīr, however, makes no mention of any conflict between the two, but simply states that al-Muntaṣir sent Waṣīf on an expedition against the Byzantines.⁴ There are certain accounts which refer to the fact that, at first, Waṣīf refused to lead this campaign and leave the Capital, thinking that it was a plot directed against the Turks. But the Caliph persuaded him that the Byzantines were threatening the Muslim frontiers and that either he himself or Waṣīf had to lead this expedition. Waṣīf was finally convinced by the Caliph's arguments and agreed to lead the army against the anticipated Byzantine assault.⁵ Moreover, the Caliph's

1. Muruj, VII, 300.

2. Tab., III, 1480-81.

3. Although Ibn Khaldūn mentions the conflict between the vizier and Waṣīf, he briefly states that the Caliph ordered Aḥmad b. al-Khaṣīb to launch the campaign as fast as possible in order to rid the Capital of the menace imposed by Waṣīf and his soldiers. Ibar, III, 282.

4. Ibn Kathir, X, 353.

5. Sibt, XI, 256a; Nujum, II, 326. The number of the soldiers in this expedition was estimated at ten thousand mawālī (Turks).

ambition to rid himself of the Turkish influence can be seen from the message which he sent to Waṣīf shortly after the army had left Samarra. He ordered him to stay on the frontiers with his troops for four years and to fight the enemy of Islam only during the summer months.¹ But even though the Caliph succeeded in removing Waṣīf and his Turks from the Capital, he failed to achieve his ultimate purpose, and the Turkish soldiers were still able to exert a pronounced influence on the life of the city.

Immediately after he ascended the throne, the Caliph al-Musta'īn rewarded the Hāshimites, the guwād and the jund by allotting an additional allowance (arzāq) to them.² At first he sought to win the support of the Turks by offering certain of their leaders, such as Atāmish, important posts throughout the Empire, but this merely resulted in exciting the jealousy of those who had not been so singled out for favour.³ The only way the latter could obtain the wealth and position they coveted was to protest openly and let their voices reach the Caliph. The power of the Turkish military slaves reached the point that their compatriots in

1. Tab., III, 1485; Ibn Kathir, X, 353; Nujum, II, 326.

2. Tab., III, 1505. Muntazam, XII, 2b, mentions that the Caliph gave an allowance of five months to the jund alone, and this amount was estimated at two million dinars. Sibṭ, IX, 258a, says that the Caliph paid 'aṭā' not arzāq to his soldiers. Al-'Aynī, XVII, part 2, 262a, shares this view and adds that the Caliph gave the 'aṭā' to everybody who had paid homage to him.

3. Al-Ṭabarī speaks about the jealousy which dominated the Turkish soldiers especially during the supremacy of Atāmish and Shāhik al-Khādim. Tab., III, 1512-13.

Karkh and Dūr succeeded in putting an end to Atāmish whose position at the court provoked their envy and resentment. The farāghina troops joined the Turks in overthrowing Atāmish and they also took part in the looting of his palace.¹ The Turks became increasingly importunate in demanding money, and in order to appease them al-Musta'īn was forced to reduce the Arab element in the army. In 250/864, he suspended all the pay of Banū Umayya and the 'Uthmāmiyya who had received allowances from the dār al-'āmma.² It is possible that the money and property which the Caliph had obtained from al-Mu'tazz and al-Mu'ayyad may have been used to satisfy these greedy troops.

The Turks in Karkh and Dūr caused more trouble in the capital when they learned of the plot being hatched against Bāghir. They raided the stables of the Royal family for horses so that they could reach the jawsaq as soon as possible and save Bāghir, but their efforts failed.³ When they heard that Bāghir had been murdered, they plundered and set fire to several houses in the Capital. Due to the fact that there was no one capable of issuing orders which the Turks would obey, the life of Samarra was reduced to a state of anarchy

1. Ibn Kathir, XI, 3; cf. Tab., III, 1513.

2. Tab., III, 1533.

3. It is said that the house of Dulayl b. Ya'qūb, the scribe of Bughā al-Ṣaghīr, and those of his close neighbours were looted. Tab., III, 1540. But Sibṭ, IX, 296b also includes the house of the Caliph among the properties looted.

and chaos.¹ Al-Ṭabarī mentions that the troops deeply regretted the departure of the Caliph from the Capital following Bāghir's murder, but he gives no reason for this regret.² It may have been due to the fact that the Caliph and his companions had escaped from their hands and thus prevented them from taking revenge. Yāqūt³ dwells on this point and states that al-Musta'īn fled to Baghdad when he heard about the tumult in his Capital which was caused by the rioting of the Turkish soldiers against himself. It has been suggested that the Caliph, unable to stand against the tyranny of his Turkish guards, fled to Baghdad, where he expected the support of the Arab and Persian soldiers.⁴

Henceforth, the Turkish mercenaries became the real rulers of Samarra, wielding absolute authority. They imposed severe restrictions on the inhabitants: even boats were not allowed to leave for Baghdad, heavy punishment awaiting anyone whom they suspected of wanting to escape. They thus prevented the Caliph's supporters from joining him.⁵ Despite their supreme power, the Turkish soldiers did not dare either to dismiss the Caliph or to appropriate the

1. The term used to denote these lawless group is mushaghghibīn (Subverters). Tab., III, 1539.

2. Tab., III, 1530; Miskawayh, VI, 577.

3. Yaqut, VI, I, 408-409.

4. Ameer Ali, A Short History of the Saracens, London, 1961, p. 291.

5. When the Turks learned that a boatman had made a deal with certain people to carry them down to Baghdad, he was given two hundred lashes and hung from the mast of the ship. Tab., III, 1542. This savage punishment was intended to spread panic among the inhabitants and force them into obedience.

Caliphate for themselves. This may be interpreted as arising from the religious significance with which the 'Abbāsids had invested the office and their own persons.¹

On the other hand, the Turks did not appear to be interested in ruling the Empire, but rather in satisfying their greed for immediate wealth and prestige. To the extent that it is possible to discern a long-term objective in their actions, it would seem to be a wish to maintain their own supremacy over the other elements in the army, and to enjoy such prestige as this would ensure.

Al-Mu'tazz, having been brought to the throne by the Turkish troops in Samarra, at first sought their support in trying to remedy the critical situation in which the Empire found itself. On his accession, he ordered the payment of allowances for ten months in advance; but as a result of the shortage of money in the bayt al-māl, allowances of only two months could be paid.² In addition to such bribes, however, he also sought to impress upon them the sacred nature of the Caliphate and the homage and obedience due to the person holding this dignified office.³ He was not above pursuing the political objectives of his position, the first of which

1. H.A.R. Gibb, "Government and Islam under the Early 'Abbāsids", pp. 120-121.

2. Tab., III, 1545. Al-Musta'īn in fact left five hundred thousand dinars in the treasury, (bayt al-māl), while his mother left about a million dinars, and his son al-'Abbās six hundred thousand dinars.

3. Tab., 1545-49. Reference has already been made to the text of homage to the Caliph which was mainly based on religious references.

was to rid himself of his rival al-Musta'īn,¹ and he was prepared to countenance any barbarous action committed by his troops in their advance on Baghdad. This army was composed of five thousand Turks and farāghina, in addition to two thousand maghāribā, and it spread fear and consternation among the inhabitants of the villages it routed by plunder and destruction.² The villagers fled from their homes and sought security in the cities, leaving the villages almost deserted, thus badly affecting the economic life of the region.³

After winning the war against Baghdad the Turks seemed more secure and assured than at any previous time. They were able to force the Caliph to reinstate his arch-enemies in the posts which they had held during the reign of al-Musta'īn.⁴ Finding that the most effective way of retaining their good favour was by bribery, al-Mu'tazz employed this on an extravagant scale to further his own designs. When he

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1. There are certain indications that during the civil war al-Musta'īn increased the allowances of his soldiers, especially the ushrūsaniyya, in order to keep them satisfied. When al-Husayn b. al-Afshīn arrived in Baghdad, al-Musta'īn increased the pay of his soldiers to sixteen thousand dirham a month. Moreover, al-Musta'īn awarded the 'atā' to everybody who had joined his army against the Turks in Samarra. Tab., III, 1555, 1560.
 2. Tab., III, 1555-56; cf. R. Levy, A Baghdad Chronicle, p.109.
 3. One may grasp some idea of what the state of the finances were at this time by noticing that the allowances of the Turks, the maghāribā and the shākiriyya was estimated at two hundred million dinars a year, and that this was equal to two years revenue from the whole Empire. Tab., III, 1685.
 4. Tab., III, 1660.

imprisoned his brother al-Mu'ayyad - whose influence was great among the slave troops - he accompanied the act by the exceptional issue of 'atā' to the Turks and maghāribā.¹ The Caliph adopted this policy in order to fulfil his objective of securing the Caliphate by ridding himself of his rival.²

In Muḥarram 252/January 866, a military expedition was sent to the town of Anbār³ to expel the Turkish and the maghāribā soldiers who were disturbing the area.⁴ This is an instance of the negative attitude of this Caliph towards the ever increasing power of the Turkish mercenaries. Sensing the Caliph's hostility towards them they grew very resentful, causing further disturbances in Samarra on 27 Shawwāl 253/30 October 867 when, along with the soldiers the farāghina and the ushrūsaniyya, they mutinied and demanded an allowance of four months pay. It was in attempting to settle this affair that Waṣīf lost his life. His son,

1. Tab., III, 1668; Ibar, III, 297; Ibn Nubāta, II, 125b.

2. It has been suggested that the loyalty of the standing army was assiduously fostered, and great care was taken by sovereigns who wished to assure the succession for their own nominees, to win the allegiance of these troops. R. Levy, Social Structure of Islam, p. 418.

3. Al-Anbār, a town on the left bank of the Euphrates, lies on the north western projection of the Sawād on a cultivable plain near the desert and near the first navigable canal from the Euphrates to the Tigris (the Nahr 'Īsā). The 'Abbāsids used it as their Capital for a few months before they established Baghdad. Le Strange, pp. 25, 31, 32; EI², s.v. Al-Anbār.

4. Tab., III, 1656-57.

Šālih was no more successful in his efforts to cope with the situation, for the state could not really afford to pay the amounts that the rebels were claiming.¹ The Caliph, in his turn, had no money in the bayt al-māl to pay them, and when he asked his mother to give him the amount needed to meet these demands, she denied having any such sum. And so the Turks, in league with troops of the farāghina and the maghāriba, deposed the Caliph,² and put him to death under torture. One of the accounts has it that he was left standing in the sun, in the palace courtyard at a time of day when it was so hot that he had to keep lifting one foot and then the other from the scorching earth and that from time to time he received blows about the head.³

The Turkish troops, beyond the power of governmental control, insubordinate to the Caliph and their own leaders alike, were left as a law unto themselves. Al-Mu'tazz, who had planned to counter their activities by using the maghāriba against them,⁴ suffered the disappointment of seeing the two actually working in alliance against him. The poets of the period reflect the dismay with which the situation was viewed.

1. The amount demanded was fifty thousand dinars. Tab., III, 1718.

2. Tab., III, 1719. Dhahabi, Tarikh, XII, 53a, does not mention any group other than the Turks. See also Muntazam, XII, 29a.

3. Another account, also in al-Tabarī, dealing with the Caliph's death has it that he was put into a bath of boiling water and left there until he died. Tab., III, 1710-11; Muruj, VIII, 4; Sibṭ, IX, 289b; cf. Bayhaqī, II, 344.

4. Tab., III, 1681.

/ 'The Turks start rebellions and thus destroy our Empire; and our ruler is now nothing but a guest. They have taken the rule into their own hands and the world must be silent and obey. This is not the way to keep the Empire in order; no enemy can be fought thus and no unity preserved.'

And another one says:

'The free men are gone, they have been destroyed and lost; time has placed me amongst barbarians. It was said to me: "You remain too much at home;" and I replied "There is no joy in going out." Whom do I meet when I look around? Apes riding on saddles.'¹

Another poet composed a poem shortly after the death of al-Mu'tazz, in which he says:

'They (the Turks) do not dread the army and do not fear the sword. Alas! he (al-Mu'tazz) is dead, this poor dethroned Monarch. Behold, the Turks are the masters and the world must listen and obey. But you will see that one day God, who rules over all, will punish them with a terrible end.'²

1. Tha'ālībī, Yatīmat al-Dahr, II, 84.

2. Muruj, VII, 400; see also Ibn al-Mu'tazz, pp. 82-84.

C. The Position of the Turkish troops during the reign of al-Muhtadī

The period starts with the departure in Ramaḍān 255/ August 869, of Mūsā b. Bughā from Rayy for Samarra, which led to a recurrence of trouble in the capital and to a serious political crisis. Mūsā was stationed in Rayy with the mawālī (Turks) army, but his assistant, Muflih (brother of Bāykabāk) moved into Ṭabaristān, after he had driven al-Ḥasan b. Zayd and his followers into the area occupied by the Daylamīs. Mūsā had begun to collect the kharāj from Rayy for the year 256/869-70, and on Sunday 1 Ramaḍān 255/ 13 August 867 five hundred thousand dirhams were paid to him. On hearing that Mūsā intended to leave them, the inhabitants of the region were dismayed and begged him to stay for the sake of their security and safety. Mūsā, however, was forced to leave the area at the insistence of his mawālī who had learned about the money which Ṣālih b. Waṣīf had extorted from the secretaries and from al-Mu'tazz's mother.¹

As soon as the Caliph, al-Muhtadī, heard about Mūsā's activities he commanded him to remain where he was. But against the express wish of the Caliph, and contrary to the request of the inhabitants of Rayy, Mūsā and his army left the region, with the intention of entering the Capital and sharing the wealth with the troops of Samarra.²

1. Al-Mu'tazz's mother corresponded with Mūsā and asked him to leave the area so that she could rescue her son as well as the secretaries from the soldiers. Tab., III, 1736-37.

2. Tab., III, 1738-39; Muruj, VIII, 5; Sibṭ, X, 1b; Kamil, VII, 138.

On Monday 11 Muharram 256/20 December 869, Mūsā and his army entered Samarra, on the very day that al-Muhtadī was holding a public hearing for the mazālim. The Caliph had requested Mūsā and his followers to wait for a while before giving them permission to enter the court; but after they had been waiting for some time, they began to suspect that the Caliph was plotting something against them. Therefore they swept into the court, and removing the Caliph from his seat, forced him to mount one of the shākiriyya horses. They took with them at the same time all the mounts of the khāssa in the jawsaq, and rode off towards the Karkh.¹

This manoeuvre by the mawālī was to complicate the situation in the Capital. Shortly after the arrival of Mūsā's troops, Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf went into hiding because they had demanded from him, "the blood of the secretaries together with their property; the blood of the Caliph al-Mu'tazz and his property also."² His disappearance created another crisis in the Capital, which was to lead to his murder. The Turkish mercenaries in Samarra were too powerful for either the Caliph or any of their own leaders to control. Their attitude was unpredictable; on Wednesday 4 Ṣafar 256/1 January 870, they appeared to have accepted the Caliph's policy, and opposed their leaders. The Turkish troops from Karkh and Dūr gathered in the outskirts of the

1. Tab., III, 1787-89; Muruḥ, VIII, 6; Kamil, VII, 139-40; cf. Ibn Kathir, XI, 20.

2. Tab., III, 1789; cf. Tanbih, p. 317; Sibṭ, X, 2a.

city/and sent word to the Caliph, begging him to send one of his brothers to hear their plea.¹ Al-Muhtadī despatched his eldest brother 'Abd Allāh (Abū al-Qāsim) with Muḥammad b. Mubashir, better known as al-Karkhī. The troops promised their obedience to the Caliph, saying that they were aware of the plot of Mūsā b. Bughā, Bāykabāk and other leaders to dismiss the Caliph. The mawālī promised the delegation that they would oppose this plot with their own blood but meanwhile, they complained of their own poor economic position.² 'Abd Allāh and Muḥammad accepted their petition and immediately presented it to the Caliph who, in turn, sent them back with a favourable reply. The mawālī, who now numbered one hundred and fifty horsemen and five hundred infantry, received the delegation with great respect. Abū al-Qāsim read aloud to them the Caliph's reply, in which he offered his grateful thanks for their obedience and promised to ameliorate their living conditions.³

The mawālī, thereupon, wrote a reply to the Caliph, making the following points:

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1. Cf. Von Kremer, p. 345, who writes, "Under Muhtadī, and previously under Musta'īn, these who called forth a serious insurrection by rising against the Turkish soldiers and their immense influence, were the Arab soldiers known as *shākariyyah*." Makiyyah regards them as a group of Turks from Karkh and Dūr, stating that these are areas of Baghdad; whereas they are in fact districts of Samarra, although in Baghdad there is an area called Karkh. Makiyyah al-'Ubaydī, Baghdad fī al-Qarn al-Thālith al-Hijrī, M.A. Thesis, Baghdad University, 1387/1967, p. 79.
 2. Tab., III, 1796; Ibar, III, 299.
 3. Tab., III, 1797-98.

- (a) The Caliph should be the sole authority in the Empire and no one should have the right to interfere with his policy.
- (b) The old organization of the army, as it had been under al-Musta'īn, should once more be introduced and enforced.¹
- (c) The women of the Turkish mercenaries should no longer be included in the ziyādāt (increments).²
- (d) The 'atā should be paid every two months and the fiefs of their leaders should be abolished.³
- (e) The Commander of the Faithful should be the only one with the authority to increase pensions.

In this same message, the troops from Karkh and Dūr informed the Caliph that they themselves would follow their letter to his palace and camp outside until he met their demands. Meanwhile, they threatened to put to death anybody who dared to oppose the Caliph's command.⁴ Abū

1. The army organization during the reign of al-Musta'īn was as follows: the 'arīf who held command over nine soldiers; the khalīfa, fifty soldiers, and the qā'id one hundred. Tab., III, 1797.
2. Ibar, III, 299; cf. Tab., III, 1797. This system of payment was introduced during the reign of the Caliph al-Mu'taṣim who intended to keep the Turks as a pure ethnic group. Yaqubi, Buldan, p. 33.
3. Von Kremer translates the passage to mean that the wages of the soldiers should be paid every second month, and landed property, which had been improperly transferred to the Turkish officers, should be forfeited to the treasury, p. 346; cf. Ibar, III, 283, 295.
4. They promised the Caliph that if a single hair of his head was harmed they would murder Mūsā, Bāykabāk, Muflīḥ, Yājūr, Bakālbā and others in retaliation. Cf. Von Kremer p. 346, who fails to distinguish between this letter and the next one. Ibar, III, 299.

al-Qāsim took their message to al-Muhtadī, while the mawālī were marching around Samarra putting fear into the hearts of their own leaders.

On Thursday 5 Šafar 256/2 January 870, before Abū al-Qāsim returned to confer with the mawālī, he asked their leaders, Mūsā, Bāykabāk and Muḥammad b. Bughā to send their own representatives to him to ask pardon for the false information they had propagated concerning the plot against the Caliph. The leaders agreed to this suggestion and each one of them appointed his own representatives. By now the strength of the mawālī is said to have been in excess of a thousand horsemen and three thousand foot soldiers. Abū al-Qāsim took the Caliph's reply and went with the leaders' representatives to meet the mawālī. The message was read out to them, and as soon as the reader had finished, Abū al-Qāsim introduced the leaders' representatives as "the messengers of your leaders who have come to beg your pardon for what you have heard about their deeds." In addition, Abū al-Qāsim, on behalf of the leaders, said, "You are brothers, you are one of us and belong to us".¹ Then each of the leaders' representatives delivered a speech similar to Abū al-Qāsim's.

The mawālī now wrote the Caliph another letter similar to the first, expressing their feelings towards him and stressing that they would not be satisfied until he approved the following five conditions (tawqī'āt):²

1. Tab., III, 1800.

2. Tab., III, 1801.

- (a) Increments to the officers should be reduced.
- (b) The porters (bawwābīn) from among the mawālī should not be regarded as belonging to the khāṣṣa, but as outsiders (barāniyyīn).
- (c) Their military organisation should be along the same lines as during the time of al-Musta'īn.
- (d) Fiefs (iqtā'āt) should be returned to the Caliph.
- (e) He would withdraw the existing supervision of the fiefs (رد استرجاع) so that they could place in power someone whom they trusted and put under his command fifty soldiers from Dūr and another fifty from Samarra. All these soldiers should be selected from the dawāwīn.

In addition to these requests the mawālī also demanded that:

- (a) The jaysh should be under the command of one of the Caliph's brothers who could mediate between the mawālī and the Caliph himself. Meanwhile they would not recognize the authority of any person from among their own ranks, i.e. it would not be permissible for a Turk to be in charge of the jaysh.
- (b) Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf and Mūsā b. Bughā should be brought to the court of justice and charged for unlawful possession of money.
- (c) The mawālī would be satisfied with nothing less than the immediate payment of their 'aṭā' and with regular pay for their arzāq (allowances) every two months.

In this message the mawālī threatened the Caliph by disclosing that they had written to ahl-Samarra and maghāribā asking them to join the mawālī. As soon as these people

joined up with them they would march together to the Caliph's palace and demonstrate in front of it until their demands were met. Meanwhile, the mawālī sent letters to their own leaders informing them of the content of their letter to al-Muhtadī. The mawālī had full confidence in the Caliph and believed that he would not refuse their demands unless their own leaders interfered. If they opposed the mawālī's demands, the latter would not agree to any other proposal put to them and would threaten their leaders with death. Nothing would satisfy the mawālī except the appearance of Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf so that they could reconcile his conflict with Mūsā b. Bughā. By so doing they hoped to discover the place where the money was kept, because Ṣāliḥ had promised them six months pay before he went into hiding.¹ The mawālī handed over their letter to the representative of Mūsā b. Bughā. Meanwhile, a few of them departed with Abū al-Qāsim, the bearer of their message to the Caliph. This action would offer them an opportunity of meeting the Caliph and of hearing his reactions to their demands. When the news that Abū al-Qāsim had left the mawālī reached Mūsā he sent five hundred horsemen and ordered them to camp at bāb al-ḥayr (a place situated between the jawsaq and Karkh). Abū al-Qāsim marched with the messengers of the Turkish soldiers and the representatives of their leaders to meet these people. Mūsā's messenger handed the mawālī's letter to his master and the other leaders. Abū al-Qāsim then informed them that he was carrying another message for the

1. Tab., III, 1202; cf. Tab., III, 1789.

Caliph; wherefore it was decided that they should go together to al-Muhtadī's residence. When they gained an audience with him, Abū al-Qāsim gave the Caliph the mawālī's reply which he read carefully and immediately ordered his vizier to answer it, promising the following:

- (a) The Caliph would accede to the mawālī's demands, and instructed them to appoint one of the officers of the dawāwīn whom they trusted to carry out their demands.
- (b) As to their request that one of his brothers be appointed to mediate between himself and them, the Caliph seemed to think that there was no need for such a mediator, for he was prepared to meet them and hear their requests in person. The Caliph pointed out that he had in fact already unofficially appointed a person such as the mawālī wanted, i.e. Abū al-Qāsim.
- (c) The Caliph ordered the mawālī to list the immediate reforms necessary to improve their economic conditions, so that he could satisfy them without delay.¹

Al-Tabarī (III, 1803-1804) presents a text of Mūsā's reply to the mawālī's previous letter in which he makes the following remarks:

- (a) There are family ties linking the mawālī with their leaders.
- (b) The mawālī would receive better economic treatment, in accordance with the promises made in the Caliph's letter.
- (c) As far as Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf and the change of attitude of

1. Tab., III, 1803.

the leaders towards him is concerned, the latter wanted Ṣāliḥ to give the soldiers the amount of money which he promised them. The leaders, however, merely asked the Caliph about it.

- (d) The mawālī were assured that the Caliph was highly respected, and obeyed by their leaders. Moreover, the existence of any threat affecting the sovereignty of the Caliphs was denied.

These two letters were read to the mawālī by Abū al-Qāsim on Thursday late in the afternoon, and he was promised that verdicts on both would be given the following morning, because it was too late to form any concrete proposals that day.

On Friday 6 Ṣafar, 256/3 January 870, Mūsā b. Bughā rode from the Caliph's palace with fifteen hundred soldiers and camped between Karkh and the jawsaq. Meanwhile Abū al-Qāsim, after leaving the Caliph, marched to meet the mawālī, who numbered about fifteen hundred horsemen and three thousand infantrymen. In order to remind the mawālī of the Caliph's reply, Abū al-Qāsim stood up and read the letter once again to the crowd. The mawālī, thereupon split into three separate factions,¹ the effect of which was to prevent them from

1. (a) The first group was fully in agreement with the Caliph whom they hoped would augment their pensions because they had been suffering from arrears in their pay.

(b) The second group promises to agree with the Caliph if he would appoint his brothers as leaders of the mawālī, one in Karkh, the other in Dūr and a third in Samarra. Moreover, the mawālī would never accept the leadership of any of their compatriots.

(c) A smaller group wanted Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf to present himself to them. Tab., III, 1805.

reaching any sort of decision. Abū al-Qāsim returned to his brother with no reply. Mūsā departed immediately after Abū al-Qāsim and the angry mawālī were left to themselves.

The Caliph was probably annoyed by this indecision on the part of the mawālī, and after the Friday prayer he made a move against them by appointing Muḥammad b. Bughā as commander of the jaysh, and ordered him to march against them in company with the Caliph's brother, Abū al-Qāsim. When these troops met with the mawālī, Abū al-Qāsim told them that the Commander of the Faithful had approved all their demands and if any were unfulfilled the Caliph would rectify the situation as soon as possible. Then he read to them an assurance of protection for Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf if he should appear. In an attempt to reconcile the mawālī's dispute with their leaders, Abū al-Qāsim proclaimed that this guarantee came as a result of the intercession of Mūsā and Bāykabāk.¹ He appeared to be astonished at their persistent dissent after all these favours had been granted by the Caliph. Then disturbances broke out among them and lasted for some time, preventing Abū al-Qāsim from forming a true assessment of their situation; but finally, when he was on the point of departure, he learned that they were now making the following demands:²

- (a) Mūsā b. Bughā should hold the same position and enjoy the same prerogatives as Bughā al-Kabīr during his life time.
- (b) Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf should have the same status as Wasīf (his

1. Tab., III, 1805-1806.

2. Tab., III, 1806.

father) had during the glorious days of Bughā.

(c) Bāykabāk should regain his previous position.

(d) The leadership of the jaysh must remain in the hands of its present leader, i.e. Muḥammad b. Bughā, until Ṣāliḥ came out and paid their arzāq.

These points were, in fact, quite different from their previous requests, nor did they remain in agreement even on these conditions, but split into two divisions, one for and the other against them. Their demands can be interpreted as a change of attitude towards the Caliph who had already acted against the will of the mawālī. Abū al-Qāsim had to leave without coming to any understanding with them.

In the early morning of Saturday 7 Ṣafar 256/4 January 870, Waṣīf's son rode out with a group of the mawālī and ghilmān, and as soon as the inhabitants of the Capital saw them they clamoured for weapons.¹ The reason for this move within the Capital remains obscure, but the infantry who were pro-Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf, had plundered all the mounts of the 'amma and camped in the valley of Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm, near the mosque which had been built by Lujayn, one of al-Mutawakkil's wives. Thus, it is possible that they wished to put an end to the anarchy and to strengthen their own position so that their master, Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf would be able to appear in safety once again. On his way to the Caliph's palace, Abū al-Qāsim passed by the mawālī who gathered around him begging him to take their message to the Caliph. There was much

1. Tab., III, 1806.

confusion regarding their requests, but in the end Abū al-Qāsim realized that their main demands centred about the re-appearance of Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf. Abū al-Qāsim informed the Caliph and Mūsā b. Bughā of this, and it was said by eye-witnesses attending the Caliph's council that Mūsā b. Bughā said, "They demand Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf from me as if I were the one who were hiding him."¹

The Caliph and his generals interpreted this report to mean that the mawālī, supported by the local inhabitants, had decided on action against their leaders. The Caliph's supporters rushed for their weapons, armed themselves and marched on the mawālī. As soon as the news of their departure reached the Turks and their supporters, they became very alarmed, broke up their gatherings and scattered to various districts. Mūsā b. Bughā was, therefore, seen as having triumphed in the dispute and all the generals joined him for further action against the Turkish mercenaries. It must be remembered that a few quwād (generals) from Karkh felt inclined to favour Ṣāliḥ's followers but were not able to show their preference in face of the strength of the opposition.²

During the early morning of Monday 9 Ṣafar 256/6 January 870 there spread through the Capital news of danger threatening the Empire caused by the shārī's revolt in the northern provinces.³ This seems to have had a sobering

1. Tab., III, 1807.

2. Tab., III, 1807.

3. Tab., III, 1808.

effect on the situation in Samarra, at least for a short period, and it put an end to the anarchy and chaos which had dominated the Capital since the beginning of this Caliph's reign. Two days after, Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf was murdered by the angry Turkish soldiers and the Caliph appears to have had insufficient power to protest against it, though he actually regretted the loss of his general.¹

On Wednesday 2 Rajab 256/29 January 870, the Turks in Karkh and Dūr caused more trouble, again on the pretext of demanding payment of their arzāq. The Caliph sent his brother, accompanied by a Turkish general, to speak to them, but they refused to listen and demanded to meet the Caliph in person. Consequently a few of them were brought to the Caliph's palace that very day, and he spoke to them. Meanwhile, he had sent orders to stop the 'atā' from being paid to the soldiers that day or the following day. The Turkish troops had postponed their decision until they learned what course Mūsā had followed in regard to the 'atā' with his soldiers, who had been despatched to fight against the Ṣhārī. Mūsā paid his soldiers the 'atā' for one month, thus providing a further reason for discontent in the Capital.

Taking advantage of the situation, al-Muhtadī attempted to play off the mawālī one against the other by opening new negotiations while Mūsā and his troops were away from the Capital. These new negotiations took place between himself and the Turks in Karkh and Dūr who were under the command of Muḥammad b. Bughā. The disunity and restlessness amongst

1. Tab., III, 1811.

the troops, however, prevented the negotiators from reaching any decision. Thus, when the news of Bāykabāk's murder reached his supporters amongst the Turks, they were provoked to further action and they demonstrated against al-Muhtadī which led to an actual confrontation between the Caliph's army and the Turks on Saturday 13 Rajab 256/11 February 870.¹ On the following day the Turkish troops appeared to be in a strong position and were completely unified among themselves, having been joined by those who had formerly supported the Caliph. In consequence, al-Muhtadī was not in a position to achieve a victory over the rival troops, and he was taken captive while fleeing from the scene of the battle. He was brutally treated and forced to abdicate his throne, and shortly afterwards, on Thursday 18 Rajab 256/16 February 870, his death was announced.

Although the Turks would appear to have been the most powerful political force in the Capital during the reign of al-Muhtadī, amenable to the wishes of neither the Caliph nor their own leaders, they had no clear objectives beyond the satisfaction of their immediate demands which were wholly incidental to the power-structure of the state. In fact, their relations among themselves were usually so disharmonious and envious that it was rarely possible for them to unite on a single purpose; and it was only when a threat to their position became so obvious that it could not be mistaken that they were able to submerge their own differences and present a united front to the challenge.

1. Tab., III, 1816.

CHAPTER VI

THE POSITION OF THE TURKS IN THE CAPITAL

A. The Divisions among the Turks

It would be wrong to seek the explanation for this lack of unity among the Turkish slave-troops in any conflict of interest among themselves; they were the tools of their leaders who not infrequently used them to further their own ambitions for power and wealth, and in this respect they, too, can be regarded as victims, as much as those who experienced their violence.

They were originally brought to the Capital individually or in small groups and after purchase were assigned to one or another of the slave contingents in the Caliph's army. Taken from their familiar environment and thrown into the confusing complexity of metropolitan life, they found their security in the artificial community of the barracks, and in the guidance of the leader under whom they immediately served. Thus, at the time of their early introduction into the military organization of the Caliphate, they were tractable and loyal; but this loyalty was to their own Commanders and it was the latter's relation with the Caliph that determined their behaviour. In the fairly prosperous years of al-Ma'mūn and his successors, this relationship was normally of the best, and consequently we hear little of Turkish disaffection or anarchy up until the time of al-Mutawakkil. They remained isolated from the feelings and sentiments of the people among whom they lived, both by the nature of the background from which they had come

and by the conditions in which they were obliged to live in the Capital. In Baghdad their quarters were probably scattered throughout various districts, but with the removal of the Capital to Samarra they became a more integrated force and consequently were more capable of co-operating on issues which seemed to affect their own interests. The Caliphs thought it politic to maintain these troops distinct from the people of Samarra, and al-Mu'tasim even forbade them to marry outside their own race.¹

During the Caliphates of al-Mu'tasim and al-Wathiq - for a period of about ten years - this policy of segregation seems to have been successful, and the Caliph was able to exercise control over his troops. However, with the accession of al-Mutawakkil, the tendencies implicit in this situation came to a head: the various factions among the Turks, which had been united for a time after being transferred to Samarra, became envious of one another and vigilant in seeing that one of them should not gain preferment over the others. Thus, when such leaders as al-Fath b. Khāqān, 'Ubayd Allāh b. Yaḥyā and certain others, were seen to be enjoying the special respect and attention of al-Mutawakkil,² the resentment felt by some of the other Turks expressed itself through indiscipline and disobedience among the troops under their command.³ Attempts to bring them under control proved merely to aggravate their discontent, which, though

1. Yaqubi, Buldan, p. 33, reports that al-Mu'tasim bought Turkish slaves girls whom he had married to his Turkish troops.

2. Yaqubi, III, 179; Tab., III, 1953 ff.; Tanbih, p. 313.

3. Muruj, VII, 272; cf. Tab., III, 1952.

it frequently vented itself against the Caliph, was in reality born of envy of men of their own class. It would appear that the new leaders who had emerged from the ranks were now capable of influencing the troops, and the rivalries which had formerly existed between the Turkish generals were now complicated by other men of frustrated ambitions.

During the last phase of al-Mutawakkil's Caliphate these divisions exploded into anarchy. The Turkish malcontents murdered al-Fath b. Khāqān along with al-Mutawakkil, and although we are told that this happened because al-Fath attempted to protect his master, there can be little doubt that he himself was one of the objects of the assault.¹ Another Turkish dignitary Zorāfa, al-Ḥājib, having enjoyed the favour of al-Mutawakkil, was also marked for assassination, but al-Muntaṣir objected to this and they were finally satisfied by having Zarāfa pay homage to the Caliph they had put on the throne.² Thus, Zorāfa was to play an important role in most of the events which took place during the period under consideration.³

The divergence of attitudes amongst the Turkish mercenaries became apparent on the death of the Caliph al-Muntaṣir showing that jealousy and envy influenced all their actions, with the satisfaction of personal ambition over-riding all other considerations. However, despite this, the Turks were able for a while to overcome their differences and reach a

1. EI², s.v. al-Fath b. Khāqān.

2. Tab., III, 1461.

3. Tab., III, 1479.

compromise agreement on the nomination of al-Musta'īn to the Caliphate. As has already been pointed out, this probably arose from their feeling of insecurity and lack of self-confidence.

This apparent unity which the Turkish mercenaries had shown at the beginning of al-Musta'īn's reign did not last long, due mainly to the attitude taken by the Caliph towards certain Turkish leaders. His favour enabled these men to increase their influence at the court, provoking the jealousy and resentment of the other Turks. The conflict began to spread, and was encouraged by the Caliph himself in order to secure his position.¹ Such favours cost Atāmish and his scribe, Shujā' b. al-Qāsim,² their lives; but these assassinations merely made room for new Turkish leaders to claim the same prerogatives. The rank and file seem to have been fully in sympathy with these murders, seeing the newly acquired wealth and prestige of their former leaders in relation to their own humble situation,³ and they lent their support to new leaders who had risen up amongst them in challenging the authority of these parvenues.⁴

The death of Atāmish and the emergence of men such as Bāghir only served to widen the rift among the Turks. Now

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1. Al-Musta'īn was said to be behind the murder of Bāghir as well as Atāmish, and to have encouraged the other Turkish leaders, especially Waṣīf and Bughā, to perform aggressive acts against them. Tab., III, 1642.
 2. Tab., III, 1512-14; Miskawayh, VI, 566.
 3. Tab., III, 1510; Ibn 'Amīd, fols. 97b - 98a.
 4. Miskawayh, VI, 566; cf. Ibn Kathīr, XI, 3.

the antagonism between Bāghir and other generals, for example Waṣīf and Bughā, almost led to open confrontation amongst the rival factions. It is evident that the Turks were now divided into opposing groups, each trying to rid itself of its rivals and take over their wealth and their authority. In consequence, Waṣīf and Bughā, with the encouragement of their followers, plotted against Bāghir's power and influence at the court, while he, meanwhile, was bent on securing his position and was persuaded that the best way of doing so was by murdering the Caliph and these two generals. In this he had the support of his own adherents, but the situation which his actions created in the Capital was ultimately to result in his own murder, which gave his supporters a pretext for plundering and setting fire to several places within the city.¹ Certain followers of Waṣīf and Bughā, fearful and alarmed, fled in secret to Baghdad in order to join their leaders who had already arrived there with the Caliph al-Musta'īn. These Turkish soldiers, who were seeking to regain their former power, supported al-Musta'īn against their compatriots in Samarra, despite an obvious feeling of sympathy towards them.²

The impression that emerges most pronouncedly from an examination of these events is of the simple Turkish soldiers

1. Tab., III, 1539.

2. During the course of one battle between the armies of Baghdad and Samarra, the minority of the Turkish soldiers who were fighting beside the Baghdadīs showed sympathy towards their compatriots because of their heavy losses. Tab., III, 1627.

being exploited by self-interested individuals who pretended to espouse their cause while, in reality, using them to achieve their own personal ambitions. However, after their victory over the troops of Baghdad, the Turks of Samarra became aware of the power they held in their hands and even rose against their own former leaders.

Thus, on the 27 Shawwāl 253/30 October 867 the Turks, farāghina and ushrūsana mutinied and demanded four months' wages. Bughā, Waṣīf and Sīma al-Sharābī set off with a hundred men from their bodyguard to negotiate with them. When Waṣīf asked what they wanted, they replied, "Our wages." Waṣīf replied, "Take dust (for your wages)! What money have we?" Bughā, however, said, "Very well, we will ask the Commander of the Faithful to hold a conference in the palace of Ashnās (about your claim). However, the non-Turkish soldiers should be excluded." They accepted this proposal and marched to the Caliph's residence. All the leaders went in with the exception of Waṣīf who remained outside with the angry crowd and our sources, as usual, keep silent as to why he stayed out. Suddenly one of the mob threw himself upon Waṣīf and dealt him two blows with a sword while another attacked him with a knife, killing him on the spot.¹

Unlike previous murders of Turkish generals, this seems to have been a spontaneous act on the part of the troops and not the result of intrigue or plotting by rival contenders for power. It was a signal to others who might seek to use them as instruments for private ends that, henceforth, they could not count on unquestioning loyalty from this quarter. The

1. Tab., III, 1687-88.

new emergent leaders sought their favour by totally relaxing discipline and allowing the situation to degenerate into mindless anarchy. The Caliph and his suite thought it politic to treat this as an internal matter among the Turks and to refrain from openly interfering or taking sides.

But clearly the Caliph did have his preferences among the Turkish dignitaries and, whether he wished it or not, this became known and served to widen the rift of jealousy between them. In fact, the Caliph al-Mu'tazz employed his favour and patronage in playing one off against the other in order to maintain his own power.¹ During the last crisis of his reign, when the Turkish troops were causing trouble in the Capital, rebelling against their leaders and demanding the payment of their allowances, they openly asked the Caliph for fifty thousand dinars, promising to murder their own leader, Ṣālih b. Waṣīf if he paid them this sum.² This shows that the Turkish soldiers were mainly seeking their own interests, not that of their leaders. But when al-Mu'tazz failed to collect the full amount, they united, and succeeded in bringing to an end his reign and his life.

The Turks appeared to be united at the time of the death of al-Mu'tazz, but with the arrival in Samarra of Mūsā b. Bughā and his army, their position once again became very critical and their power was in danger of collapsing. Since the very beginning of al-Muhtadī's reign, the Turkish mercenaries had been clearly divided into two major groups, the one led by Ṣālih b. Waṣīf whom the Caliph seemed to favour, and the other led by Mūsā b. Bughā. Nevertheless, the Turkish rank and file

1. This can be seen in the murder of Bughā al-Sharābī, Tab., III, 1694-96.

2. Tab., III, 1718.

initially supported the Caliph against their own leaders, and were prepared to resist them if they attempted to undermine either al-Muhtadī's or their own position. During the chaotic reign of this Caliph, Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf was murdered by the opposition group but his supporters appear to have remained indifferent, content with the Caliph's promise to pay them their allowances.¹

The struggle for supremacy and power among the Turks during the short reign of al-Muhtadī was to hasten the decline of their influence in state affairs. Their conflict, however, encouraged the non-Turkish military elements to support one or another of the warring factions, while the Caliph himself was striving to widen the rifts between them, hoping that he might be able to restore some of the 'Abbāsids' former dignity and pride by discrediting the Turks and favouring the Arab and Persian elements in the Army.² Al-Muhtadī thought that he could use his loyal Turks to suppress those in rebellion against him, but when the final confrontation came the former went over to the enemy and he was left with no support from that quarter.³

The last real success that the Turks may be seen to have gained in the brief period of their involvement in the affairs of the state was the dethronement of al-Muhtadī and the elevation of al-Mu'tamid to the throne. But this was to prove how insubstantial had been their hold on power all along, for once a military emergency occurred in the regions, requiring their presence, the capital returned to its former normality and an 'Abbāsīd could again be seen directing the course of events.

1. Kamil, VII, 81; cf. Makiyya al-'Ubaydī, p. 79.

2. Yaqubi, III, 188, states that al-Muhtadī changed his attitude towards the Turks by favouring the abnā'.

3. Yaqubi, III, 188-89; Tab., III, 1827-31.

B. The Attitude of the other military groups towards the Turks.¹

Although the Arabs were the main group who suffered from the introduction of Turkish slaves into the army, there were other elements, also, which were to feel its effects.² These at times united to oppose the growing might of the newcomers.

The first open protest against the insolent appropriation of power by the Turks was voiced immediately after the murder of al-Mutawakkil, when the contingent which had been formed by this Caliph under the command of 'Ubayd Allāh b. Yahyā gathered round their leader begging him to take decisive action against the conspirators and their leader, the Caliph's son al-Muntasir. But 'Ubayd Allāh, on learning that al-Mu'tazz had been summoned into the presence of al-Muntasir, refused this request.³

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1. The term "The other military groups" implied non-Turkish soldiers, whether or not they were Arabs.
 2. E.G. Browne sees the reign of al-Mutawakkil as characterised by the ascendancy of the Turkish party, accompanied by repression of the Arabs and, to a lesser extent, of the Persians, A Literary History of Persia, I, 341-2.
 3. It was reported that the elements involved in this action were a group of abnā', 'ajam, arman, zawāqīl of a'rāb origin and others. Their number was estimated at ten thousand. Tab., III, 1463; Miskawayh, VI, 557; TBN, fol. 63b.

In consequence, on the morning of the day on which al-Muntaṣir received the homage of the people, when the news of the Caliph's murder spread to al-Māhūza (the murdered Caliph's residence in Samarra), the jund and the shākiriyya, supported by the ghawghā', the 'āmma and others gathered together at the bāb al-'āmma of ja'farī. The angry crowd grew even larger and there was much argument among them about the oath of allegiance with which they appear to have been discontented. Then 'Attāb b. 'Attāb, one of the new Caliph's advisers, came out from his audience with al-Muntaṣir and delivered the Caliph's message to them.¹ It was met with strong resistance from the angry gathering. Taken aback by the abuse which was showered upon him, he returned to inform his master of their feelings. On hearing this, al-Muntaṣir became very angry and came out in person, surrounded by the maghāriba troops.² As the Caliph approached the gathering he shouted to his soldiers, "Dogs, get them." The maghāriba immediately attacked the crowd, forcing them to retreat and, finally to

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1. It was also stated that Zurāfa al-Hājib was the one who delivered this message. Tab., III, 1479.
 2. It will be shown below that the maghāriba, who came to be considered as one of the Arab elements in the army, in most crises stood by the Caliphs and were their main supporters.

disperse.¹

This protest against the new Caliph can be considered as an expression of the feeling of the non-Turkish elements about the superiority which was being accorded to these parvenues, whom they feared would ultimately displace them entirely in the army and in the running of the State. They sought the support of the people, but there was such a lack of leadership amongst them that this could not be put to effective use, and consequently throughout the reign of al-Muntaṣir they seem to have quietly acquiesced to the new state of affairs.

As soon as al-Musta'īn ascended the throne a riot spread through the capital in protest against the Turk's decision to make him Caliph, instead of al-Mu'tazz.² There is some discrepancy in the sources concerning the origin of the groups who organised the riot: Al-Ṭabarī takes the view that they were the shākiriyya, who supported Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir, the ṭabariyya cavalry,³ and a thousand soldiers from the 'āmma.⁴ Ibn al-Jawzī refers to them as mainly

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1. The maghāriba attacked the crowd and drove them towards the three gates of the city. The crowd, however, got out of control and scattered in various directions, a few of them dying as a result of this confusion. Tab., III, 1479.
 2. R. Levy sees the uprising as a protest against the Turks' disregard for al-Mu'tazz's superior entitlement to the throne. The people of Samarra, out of loyalty to the Prophet's family, gathered in force to oppose the candidate of the Turks and to enforce the claim of al-Mu'tazz, A Baghdad Chronicle, p. 107.
 3. Ṭabariyya seems to be a group of horsemen who were possibly brought from the district of Ṭabaristān.
 4. Tab., III, 1503.

coming from the 'amma, with some other unspecified soldiers,¹ while Ibn Kathīr holds the view that they were a band of discontented Turks.² Ibn Miskawayh,³ Ibn Nubāta⁴ and Ibn Khaldūn⁵ repeat al-Ṭabarī's view with minor variations but all of them seem to agree that the instigators of the riot were mainly soldiers of non-Turkish Origin.

The anti-Turkish crowd took advantage of the ceremonial celebrations of the new Caliph to attack the ushrūsaniyya who were arranged in two rows to protect al-Musta'īn.⁶ The ushrūsaniyya, however, broke ranks and gathered together in groups, supported by the maghāribā.⁷ A battle ensued in which the insurgents fought bravely, both sides suffering heavy casualties. The next day the 'amma attacked the Turks, inflicting casualties and capturing weapons. But in the end the supporters of the new Caliph won the day, and continued to enjoy a privileged position in the circle of the court.

1. Muntazam, XII, 2b.

2. Ibn Kathir, XI, 2.

3. He states that they were the soldiers of Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir supported by the ṭabariyya and various other groups of people. Miskawayh, VI, 562-63.

4. Ibn Nubāta, II, 120b, considers them as the shākiriyya forces plus elements of the jund.

5. Ibn Khaldūn sees them as coming from the jund and the lower classes and he regards them as supporters of Ibn Ṭāhir. They were later augmented by the shākiriyya and the mubayyida. Ibar, III, 283.

6. Their cry was, " يا مختار يا منصور "

"O Mu'tazz, the protected." Tab., III, 1503.

7. They joined them after the mubayyada had associated themselves with the shākiriyya. Tab., III, 1504.

Although the shākiriyya and the jund had lost the battle, they did not remain wholly submissive; in 249/863 they supported the 'amma in Baghdad against the government in Samarra for the sake of receiving their allowances.¹ They proclaimed that the main purpose of joining this riot was to force the government to pay their allowances. This may have been used as a means to show their anger against the Turkish supremacy which they hoped to diminish in order to regain a certain amount of power and thus suppress the Turkish influence at the court.

There are many indications that most of the non-Turkish elements united with al-Musta'in in Baghdad against the army of Samarra.² The majority of the soldiers who were sent to fight against Baghdad were Turkish slaves.³ During the war, certain regular groups in the army, mainly the shākiriyya, refused to join al-Mu'tazz's forces and went to the support of the army in Baghdad. Thus on Wednesday, 12 Šafar 251/16 March 865, 'Abd Allāh b. Sulaymān b. Tāhir arrived in Baghdad with about three hundred men from the shākiriyya.

1. Tab., III, 1510; Kamil, VII, 80.

2. Only six Turkish and maghāribā military leaders were said to be fighting with the army of Baghdad. Tab., III, 1595. It should be remembered that these leaders were not fighting for the benefit of al-Musta'in himself, but rather with the aim of regaining their previous positions of power.

3. The army which was sent from Samarra against Baghdad consisted of five thousand Turks and farāghina and two thousand maghāribā. Only one week after the beginning of the fighting al-Mu'tazz strengthened his troops by sending another force of Turks, the maghāribā and the fārāghina. Tab., III, 1555, 1562.

On the same day the shākiriyya who had been in Samarra under the command of various leaders arrived in Baghdad with the intention of strengthening the army of al-Musta'īn and of fighting the Turkish mercenaries.¹ On Monday, 24 Ṣafar 251/28 March 865, the shākiriyya who were with the army of Mūsā b. Bughā in Syria refused their leader's request to march on Baghdad to support al-Mu'tazz against al-Musta'īn. On the other hand, the Turkish element in this army responded gladly to the request and encouraged their leader to hasten their despatch to Baghdad.² Moreover, on the 5 Rabī' II 251/10 April 865 thirteen hundred soldiers from the shākiriyya, under the leadership of Ḥabshūn b. Bughā al-Kabīr, arrived in Baghdad and immediately joined the forces of al-Musta'īn.³

On the 5 Rajab 251/3 August 865, Muzāḥim b. Khāqān received a message from al-Mu'tazz in Kūfa, where he had been sent by al-Musta'īn to suppress a revolt, ordering him to bring his troops to Baghdad and join the forces attacking the city. Meanwhile, al-Mu'tazz promised him and his soldiers great rewards if they joined him. When Muzāḥim read the Caliph's letter to his soldiers, the Turks; the farāghina and the maghāriba were pleased at the opportunity being given to them to join forces with their own people and strengthen their position against the common enemy, i.e. al-Musta'īn's

1. The number of the shākiriyya who arrived in Baghdad was estimated at only forty individuals. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir rewarded them as well as the shākiriyya who had already arrived with Sulaymān b. Ṭāhir. Tab., III, 1559-60.

2. Tab., III, 1582; cf. Kamil, VII, 98, where he mentions that Mūsā b. Bughā was intending to join al-Musta'īn but his Turkish soldiers refused his request.

3. Tab., III, 1585, 1595.

army! On the other hand the shākiriyya, who were with Muzāḥim, strongly objected to al-Mu'tazz's demand and decided to remain loyal to al-Musta'īn. Therefore, they marched towards Baghdad to join al-Musta'īn's troops, while Muzāḥim and his sympathizers joined the troops of Samarra.¹

During the reign of al-Mu'tazz, the maghāribā, who had never departed from their loyalty to the Caliph and had hitherto always appeared to associate themselves with the Turks, seem to have become disquietened at the position of superiority which was being gained by the Turkish mercenaries and they upbraided them for their savagery and brutality in deposing and murdering both Caliphs and ministers.² The enmity grew until finally on 1 Rajab 252/27 July 866, there was a direct confrontation between the Turks and the maghāribā, as a result of which the former were forced to leave the jawsaq where they were camped. The maghāribā seized the bayt al-māl from where they took fifty mounts which had been set aside exclusively for the use of the Turks. The latter reacted to this defeat by calling in support from their compatriots in Karkh and Dūr, but even with the support of these new contingents, they were unable to defeat the maghāribā, who were now supported by elements from the shākiriyya and the ghawghā'. A truce between the two sides was arranged by Ja'far b. 'Abd al-Wāḥid,³ under the terms of

1. Tab., III, 1619.
 2. Tab., III, 1681.
 3. He was possibly Ja'far b. Maḥmūd al-Iskāfī, the secretary of the Caliph. Cf. Tab., III, 1681.

which each would retain its present position, until a final agreement could be reached. To the Turks such a stalemate was intolerable, and, characteristically, they resolved it by murdering the two prominent leaders of the maghārība, Muḥammad b. Rāshid and Naṣr b. Sa'īd. At the same time they strengthened their own position by uniting themselves under the single leadership of Bāykabāk.¹ In this way they contrived to regain the domination of the life of the Capital which they had formerly exercised.

Al-Mu'tazz seems to have favoured the maghārība in their anti-Turkish manoeuvres, hoping that they would provide the counter-balance which would allow him to take into his hands once again the direction of affairs. It is related that al-Mu'tazz, upon hearing the news of the murder of the two maghārība leaders, became very angry and resolved to take revenge on the person who was responsible for this deed.² But he soon discovered that he did not have the power to challenge the Turks openly, so he had to be satisfied with having Muḥammad b. 'Azzūn banished to Baghdad.³

Al-Mu'tazz did not seem to have the same confidence in the shākiriyya as he had in the maghārība. The shākiriyya

1. Tab., III, 1681.

2. Muḥammad b. Rāshid and Naṣr b. Sa'īd had had a meeting in the early morning of the day on which the Turks had decided to attack them. As they were returning to their homes, they heard that Bāykabāk was marching towards Ibn Rāshid's house. They therefore took refuge in the house of Muḥammad b. 'Azzūn; but the latter betrayed them to Bāykabāk who came and slew them. Tab., III, 1681.

3. Tab., III, 1682.

of Baghdad protested to Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir; against the privileged position of the Turks when they were demanding the payment of their allowances. When Ibn Ṭāhir informed the Caliph of the situation, he received the answer: "If you have organized these soldiers for your own benefit, you yourself must pay them their allowances (from your own pocket). But if you have enlisted them for our benefit, we are not in need of them."¹ The Caliph's reply provoked the anger of the troops in Baghdad and a riot broke out in the city in Ramaḍān 252/September 866. After one day of disturbances Ibn Ṭāhir distributed two thousand dinars among them and this kept them quiet for a while.² The Caliph's attitude towards the shākiriyya shows once again the advantages enjoyed by the Turks over their military rivals in the army.

In the final crisis when al-Mu'tazz was obliged to abdicate the throne, the maghāribā and the farāghina are found acting in unison with the Turks, presumably because they had learned by experience that greater rewards would come from co-operation than from resistance. The shākiriyya were not in Samarra at that time, and therefore played no part in these events. While in Baghdad the shākiriyya remained restless and continually expressed their discontent against the supremacy of the Turks. Therefore, on 13 Ramaḍān 255/27 August 869, they and the nā'ibā associated themselves with the 'āmma in the latter's revolt against Muḥammad b. Aws, the deputy military governor of Baghdad. The shākiriyya took advantage of the occasion to show their hatred of the Turks and to demand the payment of their wages.³

1. Tab., III, 1661-62.

2. Tab., III, 1702.

3. Al-Ṭabarī says that the main cause for this trouble was the lack of money to pay the soldiers. Tab., III, 1726-28.

C. The Struggle between the 'āmma and the Turks.¹

Since the very first introduction of the Turks into Baghdad, the inhabitants of the city had objected to their presence, as may be seen from the terms which they used in speaking of them: 'ulūj "savages" and 'ajam "foreigners".² The tradition "Leave the Turks alone as long as they leave you alone" became current and was used as a formula for discrimination against the Turks.³ The attitude and the arrogant behaviour of the Turkish troops incurred the hatred of the citizens, and from time to time provoked reprisals against them.⁴ This hostility between the troops and the

1. The term 'āmma, which has already been mentioned on several occasions is used here to refer to all classes of society at the time, except the khāssa, i.e. the intimate officers of the Caliph. It mainly refers to the native inhabitants of the Capital as well as Baghdad, i.e. excluding the 'āmma of the Turks. B.M. Fahad, Al-'Āmma fī Baghdād, Baghdad, 1967, pp. 2-3. According to the Shī'a scholars the term 'āmma was used to refer to the Sunnites. See al-Tūsī, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī (d. 460/1067), Fihrist Kutub al-Shī'a wa uṣūlihim, ed. by A. Sprenger and others, Calcutta, 1854, 281 f. But it is difficult to apply this term to our period of study since 'āmma was used by non-Shī'ite scholars and appeared in historical rather than theological or philosophical works.

2. Tab., III, 1180-81.

3. I. Goldziher, Muslim Studies, I, 245.

4. The people of Baghdad, in particular the youths, old men, and women received severe treatment from the Turks, which led the inhabitants to react every now and then against such behaviour. Tab., III, 1180; Muruḥ, VII, 118-9; Tanbih, p. 308; cf. Azdi, p. 416.

inhabitants came to a climax when a man stopped before the Caliph, al-Mu'tasim, and openly abused him for introducing the barbarous Turks: "O Abū Ishāq (meaning al-Mu'tasim), may God punish you for this jīwār (i.e. introducing Turks into the city). You have made our sons orphans, our wives widows and have caused the deaths of our men by settling these 'ulūj among us. By God, we will fight you with weapons which you are unable to overcome."¹ The Caliph was well aware of the insecure position of his recruits and feared the consequences if they remained in Baghdad. Therefore, under the pressure from the 'āmma, the Caliph and his troops were forced to find another place to be the capital and a garrison.² Moreover, the Caliph himself must have felt insecure in Baghdad because of his anti-Sunnite policy and the support which the imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) had amongst the 'āmma,³ who had already been seen to be antagonistic towards his new

1. Tab., III, 181; TDA, fols. 46a-b.

2. Yaqubi, Buldan, p. 30; Miskawayh, VI, 428-29; TBN, fol. 94a.

3. On the Caliph's growing fear of the supporters of Ibn Ḥanbal, Patton translates from al-Maqrīzī, "After the scourging of (Ibn Ḥanbal), al-Mu'tasim brought out Ishāk Ibn Ḥanbal (Aḥmad's uncle) to the people, and asked them to witness that he would testify that he (the Khalife) gave over to them their Imām without hurt or damage to his body. It is said that if the Khalif had not caused this deception to be practised, the people would have risen in insurrection." W.M. Patton, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal and the Mihna, Leyden, 1897; cf. al-Maqrīzī, p. 8.

bodyguards. Their support could have finally been expressed in open attack on himself and his praetorians.¹ Even in the construction of the new garrison town, the Caliph allotted a special district to each ethnic group, in order to avoid any possible occasion of conflict between the 'āmma and his private troops.²

During the period before the reign of al-Musta'īn the 'āmma had participated in several anti-Turkish movements. But in the month of Ṣafar 249/March 863, they themselves provoked a riot in Baghdad in protest against the favoured position of the Turkish troops.³ The occasion for this particular rising was the defeat of the Muslim army on the Byzantine frontier, and the murder of two Muslim leaders, 'Umar b. 'Ubayd Allāh al-Aqṭa' and 'Alī b. Yahyā al-Armanī.⁴ These two leaders were considered the most efficient fighters in the thughūr and their murder was therefore a great tragedy in the eyes of the 'āmma, who suspected the Turks of complicity in it. Certain regular groups in the army, such as the abnā', the shākiriyya and the jund, took advantage of this situation and joined the 'āmma with the additional intention of demanding their allowances.⁵ In order to gain

1. Y.I. al-Sāmarrā'ī, Ta'rīkh madīnat Samarrā', I, Baghdad, 1968, 17; D. Sourdél, "The 'Abbasid Caliphate", CHI, I, 125; C. Pellat, The Life and Works of Jahiz, London, 1969, pp. 11-12.

2. Yaqubi, Buldan, pp. 30 ff., Muruj, VII, 122.

3. Cf. TBN, fol. 100a where the author uses the term 'Muslimūn' (Muslims) to refer to the rioters.

4. Tab., III, 1510; Kamil, VII, 79-80; cf. Ibn Kathir, XI, 3.

5. Tab., III, 1510; Kamil, VII, 80; Ibar, III, 284.

more/supporters for their cause, the 'amma marched on the prisons of Naṣr b. Mālīk and the qanṭara, broke in and released all the prisoners.

This action initiated another period of anarchy in Baghdad, which later was to spread to Samarra itself. The angry crowd marched towards the two bridges in the city, destroyed one of them and set fire to the other. The dīwān qīṣaṣ¹ of the two prisons was plundered, the records were torn to pieces and thrown into the river.² The 'amma also plundered the houses of Bashir and Ibrāhīm, the sons of Hārūn al-Naṣrānī, who were the scribes of Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir.³

This riot, intended merely to express the anger felt by the 'amma towards the Turkish mercenaries, expanded until the participants declared Holy war (jihād) against the Byzantines. They were encouraged in this by the wealthy people of both Baghdad and Samarra, who offered a considerable amount of money in support of anyone who was ready and willing to go on campaign. When the news of these gifts reached the other provinces many people among the 'amma rushed to Baghdad, declaring themselves willing to fight the enemies of Islam. Throughout this, the Caliph and his soldiers, i.e. the Turkish mercenaries, remained aloof and showed no sign of interest nor gave any encouragement to the fighters.⁴

1. Dīwān qīṣaṣ al-maḥbasayn is the term used for the registers of these two prisons. It probably contained the names of the prisoners and the period of their sentences.

2. Tab., III, 1510-11; Ibar, III, 284.

3. Tab., III, 1511.

4. Muntazam, XII, 8b; Ibn Kathir, XI, 3.

According to al-Ṭabarī, on Friday 21 Rabī' I 249/19 April 863, a group of unidentified soldiers in Samarra rushed towards the prison, opening its door and releasing all the prisoners.¹ Zurāfa al-Ḥājib, with a group of his mawālī, was despatched to suppress them, but the 'āmma resisted and fighting broke out between the two sides. Zurāfa and his troops suffered heavy casualties and were forced to retreat. In response to this insurgency, Atāmish, Waṣīf, Bughā and their fellow Turkish soldiers rode out to meet the 'āmma and, in the fighting which followed, the latter were defeated.² This riot by the 'āmma in Samarra is indicative of the anger felt against the Turkish soldiers and the Caliph who had not encouraged the Muslims to fight the Byzantines.

Although these attempts by the 'āmma were to some extent intended to reduce the influence of the Turkish mercenaries, they fell short of this objective; and the reason for this failure was the lack of leadership and organization, in both of which the Turks had the advantage. Their failure, however,

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1. Tab., III, 1511. Ibn Kathir XI, 3, identifies them as the 'āmma. See also Miskawayh, VI, 565; Ibar, III, 284.
 2. Tab., III, 1511-12; Kamil, VII, 80; Ibn Kathir, XI, 3. The account runs that a cooking pot was thrown at Waṣīf, who immediately ordered his men to set fire to the whole area, which included several shops as well as houses. Then the maghāribā, who were on his side, exploited the situation and plundered certain houses belonging to the 'āmma. Al-Ṭabarī adds that he saw the devastated area with his own eyes.

should not be taken as implying a surrender to the foreigners; indeed, subsequently they were to be found among most of the anti-Turkish agitations.

During the civil war between Baghdad and Samarra, the 'amma of Baghdad played an important role in supporting the forces of Baghdad, who were mainly non-Turks, against those of Samarra, who were mostly of Turkish origin. A certain group among the 'amma known as the 'ayyārūn¹ were given a special status so that they could participate more fully in this war.² The 'ayyārūn proved their bravery during the first round of fighting against the army of Samarra when on Thursday 13 Šafar 251/16 March 865 'āmmat ahl Baghdad fled from the battle-field while the 'ayyārūn stood firm in the face of the enemy.³ On the same day the ghawghā', too, fought gallantly, forcing the enemy to retreat from certain positions which they had intended to occupy.⁴ The 'ayyārūn appear to have been the most determined contingent in the army of Baghdad and, due to their courage, it suffered fewer casualties than the Samarrans.

On Wednesday 19 Šafar 251/22 March 865, the 'ayyārūn and another military group named the mubayyaḍa, played a significant role in defeating the Turkish troops.⁵ The

1. EI², s.v. 'Ayyārūn.

2. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir sent his orderly to select a certain number of soldiers from among the 'ayyārūn. These he placed under the command of an 'arīf (sergeant). Special shields and slings were made for them. Tab., III, 1552; Miskawayh, VI, 581.

3. Tab., III, 1560.

4. Tab., III, 1561; Kamil, VII, 96.

5. Tab., III, 1564; cf. Kamil, VII, 97.

'ayyārūn even wished to give pursuit and harry their rear, but Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir refused permission.¹ When the people of Samarra heard of the defeat of their army, they inferred that the position of al-Mu'tazz must be in decline and they took advantage of this to raid the sūq ashāb al-ḥulī (jewellers' market) and plunder it.²

The fighting spirit which the 'ayyārūn had shown in these battles led the governor of Baghdad, Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir, to improve the weapons with which they were provided. They were re-organized and placed under the leadership of commanders chosen from their own ranks.³ They were then stationed at the various gates of the city, where, during their first confrontation with the Turks, they killed about fifty of the enemy, losing only ten of their own number. During the following days the 'ayyārūn took up their position at the qatarbil gate and taunted the Turkish troops. When they passed beyond the gate a few of the Turkish soldiers crossed the river by boat with arrows at the ready and fought them. Despite their inferiority in numbers to the Turks, they stood firm against the attackers and massacred them. The chief of the 'ayyārūn, however, was called to the presence of the governor of Baghdad and was advised not to go out to face the enemy, except when ordered to do so.⁴

1. Tab., III, 1565.

2. Tab., III, 1565.

3. Their leaders were Yantawayh; Duwnal, Damḥāl, Abū Namla, and Abū 'Aṣāra. Tab., III, 1587. The 'ayyārūn were armed with kāfir kūbāt, in addition to their other weapons. Tab., III, 1586-87, 1589; Kamil, VII, 99.

4. Tab., III, 1588; cf. Kamil, VII, 99.

On Sunday 15 Rabī' I 251/865, the 'ayyārūn participated with the Baghdādī army in a brave fight against the soldiers of Samarra. The latter lost several ships, in addition to men and weapons.¹ Then the leader of the Baghdādī army, Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir, retreated from the battle field and ordered one of his generals, Muḥammad b. 'Awn, to let the 'āmma depart. The general was very rude to them, abusing the 'āmma and even killing one of their men. His attitude provoked their anger and they decided to murder him, but he managed to escape. The army of Samarra took advantage of these circumstances and recovered their captured ships.²

The 'āmma then accused Ibn 'Awn of supporting the army of Samarra and marched to plunder his house; but they were prevented by the guards from reaching their objective and had to content themselves with raising their voices in protest against him. Later Muḥammad b. Tāhir sent a message informing the 'āmma that he had dismissed Ibn 'Awn from all his military posts and had appointed his own brother, 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir in his place. They seemed to be content with this action and remained faithful to the army of Baghdad in the struggle against the Turkish mercenaries.³ It is evident that the 'āmma in general and the 'ayyārūn in particular were the most enthusiastic group in the army of Baghdad in their attempt to suppress the Turkish influence in the capital and restore law and order.

1. Tab., III, 1586-7; cf. Ibar, III, 289.

2. Tab., III, 1590.

3. Tab., III, 1590; Kamil, VII, 99; cf. Yaqubi, III, 183.

During the first week of Dhū al-Qi'da 251/December 865, more fighting broke out in which the Turkish troops lost the initiative and suffered heavy casualties. They were forced to retreat from the strategic positions which they held and were pursued by the 'āmma who plundered all their goods.¹ Muḥammad b. Tāhir encouraged the 'āmma in their savage drive against the Turkish troops by rewarding each man who brought the head of a Turkish soldier to him.²

Throughout this long period of war between Baghdad and Samarra, the 'āmma and the merchants suffered greatly from the shortage of food and rising prices. They went together to Muḥammad b. Tāhir and complained to him of the economic hardships they were suffering, and he promised them some improvement in the near future. Ibn Tāhir, aware of the gravity of the situation which his troops were facing, sent a secret message to al-Mu'tazz in Samarra, asking him to put an end to the war. When the people of Baghdad learned of this correspondence between Ibn Tāhir and al-Mu'tazz, they were dismayed. On 23 Dhū al-Qi'da 251/27 December 865, a group composed of the jund, the infantry, and the 'āmma gathered together in protest against what was seen as Ibn Tāhir's appeasement. The jund demanded the payment of their salaries, and the 'āmma expressed dissatisfaction with the deteriorating economic situation. They told Ibn Tāhir that whether or not he fought alongside them they would continue the war against the Turks. He promised them that he would fight the Turks, if he failed to reach some agreement with them.³

1. Tab., III, 1626-27.

2. Tab., III, 1626-27; Kamil, VII, 104.

3. Tab., III, 1639; cf. R. Levy, A Baghdad Chronicle, p.112.

When Ibn Tāhir succeeded in restoring peace with Samarra, the 'amma thought that the treaty had been arranged in the name of their own Caliph al-Musta'īn and that al-Mu'tazz was merely his heir-apparent; for this reason they kept quiet when the food-ships arrived from Samarra. But on Wednesday 10 Dhū al-Ḥijja 251/12 January 866, the Turkish envoy arrived in Baghdad and announced that the Commander of the Faithful (al-Mu'tazz) and his brother Abū Aḥmad were dictating the terms of peace, and that they would show favour to all who showed obedience and respect their commands. The 'amma reacted strongly to his proclamation, and abused the envoy as well as his master, al-Mu'tazz.¹ Realizing that Ibn Tāhir's negotiations were not what they had imagined, they assumed that capitulation to the Turks would be the outcome.

Then the 'amma advanced on Ibn Tāhir's palace where fighting broke out between them and his guards, which did not, however, prevent some of them from reaching the inner portals. They spent the whole night round the palace abusing Ibn Tāhir for deceiving the Caliph al-Musta'īn. The latter was staying in the palace and on the following morning they demanded that he be shown to them to prove that he was still alive and unharmed. Al-Musta'īn came out with Ibn Tāhir and several other courtiers, reassuring them that he was being well treated and had received no injury.²

1. Tab., III, 1630-31; cf. R. Levy, A Baghdad Chronicle, p. 113.

2. Tab., III, 1632-34; Muruḥ, VII, 366; cf. Ibn Kathir, XI, 9.

The conclusion to be drawn is that the 'amma seem to have adopted a very anti-Turkish attitude during the civil war and that they participated in almost all the fighting. They were displeased by the secret negotiations which took place between the representatives of al-Mu'tazz and the Governor of Baghdad, whom they came to regard as a traitor; but most probably their determined resistance was a reaction to the chaos which the Turkish soldiers had brought to the social and economic life of the region, and can be seen as an assertion of local patriotism.

In Ramaḍān 252/August-September 866, the 'amma again associated themselves with the revolt of the troops in Baghdad in protest against what they regarded as Ibn Ṭāhir's capitulation to the Turks and his acceptance of al-Mu'tazz as Caliph. They failed in their efforts to prevent his recognition in Baghdad, only succeeding in creating further disorders and strife in the city, which were soon put down and normality was eventually restored.¹

On Thursday, 30 Rajab 255/14 July 869, when the news of the removal of al-Mu'tazz and his replacement by Muḥammad b. al-Wāthiq al-Muhtadī, reached Baghdad,² the 'amma and the jund noisily besieged the palace of Sulaymān b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir, the Governor of the city. On being informed that the governor knew nothing about the situation in Samarra, they dispersed. The Governor told them that he still had no definite news from Samarra and that prayers would still be

1. Tab., III, 1658-68; Kamil, VII, 114-115.

2. Tab., III, 1714; Ibn Kathir, XI, 17. Both of them state that the 'amma did not know that al-Muhtadī had ascended the throne and as soon as they learned about it they stopped their resistance. Cf. Sibṭ, IX, 290b.

offered in the name of al-Mu'tazz in the mosques of Baghdad.¹

On Saturday 2 Sha'bān 255/17 July 869, the 'āmma attacked Sulaymān's palace, asking for Abū Aḥmad al-Muwaffaq b. al-Mutawakkil who was in exile in Baghdad at the time and called on the citizens of the city to pay homage to him as Caliph.² After the latter appeared and addressed them, they went away, probably because they were certain that Sulaymān would protect Abū Aḥmad from any possible threat to his life.³ The new Caliph, al-Muhtadī, sent his representative to Baghdad to quell the trouble by bribing the jund in the city, distributing thirty thousand dinars among them as an 'aṭā'. The messenger was unable to enter the city because of the riots. He informed his master in Samarra of the situation, who responded by sending a further sum of money to the people of Baghdad, which he hoped he would satisfy them.⁴ In this he was successful, and on Thursday 7 Sha'bān 255/22 July 869, homage was paid to him in Baghdad.⁵

The 'āmma, on the whole, seem to have been content with this Caliph, in spite of the troubles which they caused at the very beginning of his reign. When al-Muhtadī became involved with the restless Turkish troops, the 'āmma took his side and it was reported that the 'āmma in Samarra protested against the Turks' plan to kill the Caliph. On

1. Tab., III, 1714.

2. Tab., III, 1714-15; Sibṭ, IX, 291a; Ibn Junghūl, III, 287a.

3. Tab., III, 1715; Ibn Kathir, XI, 17; Ibn Junghūl, III, 287a.

4. Tab., III, 1715.

5. Tab., III, 1715; Kamil, VII, 134; Sibṭ, IX, 291a; cf. Ibn Kathir, XI, 17.

Saturday 30 Muḥarram 256/8 January 870, they distributed messages in the great mosque and elsewhere throughout the city, inviting the inhabitants to stand by their Caliph against the barbarous Turks.¹ Yet subsequent events show no sign that the 'āmma offered their help either in Baghdad or in Samarra, despite the critical circumstances in which the Caliph found himself. Shortly after, the sources make reference to certain 'āmma who accompanied Ṣāliḥ b. Waṣīf from his hiding place to the jawsaq,² but it is not clear whether they were supporting this Turkish leader or not.

During the course of the battle between the Caliph al-Muhtadī and his Turkish soldiers, the 'āmma appear to have been the main source of the Caliph's strength, continuing the struggle even after his army was defeated and he himself had fled. The victorious Turks went through the streets urging the 'āmma not to show any further opposition.³

From the above presentation of the position of the Turks in the Capital it is evident that, despite their supremacy, they felt insecure and had no confidence in their own power. This was mainly due to the obvious divisions among them and the opposition to their settlement in the Capital which came not only from the other military groups who considered

1. Tab., III, 1795-96; Kamil, VII, 136-37.

2. Tab., III, 1810; Ibn Kathir, XI, 22; Ibar, III, 297-98.

3. Tab., III, 1818. But in two of his several accounts concerning the death of this Caliph, al-Ṭabarī makes reference to the role of the 'āmma in this matter, saying they refused to support him. Tab., III, 1821, 1830.

the Turks as usurpers of their power but also from the 'amma. The latter initiated as well as participated in every anti-Turkish manoeuvre in order to eliminate their power. But, due to the lack of leadership and an organized body to counteract the Turkish influence, the latter were able to suppress all the attempts which were made on their position.

CHAPTER VII

THE REVOLTS IN THE PROVINCES

The 'Abbāsids were unable to retain direct control over all the land which passed to them from the Umayyads. Spain, for example, never came under their domination and indeed, in 139/757 the Umayyad refugee 'Abd al-Rahmān succeeded in establishing an amirate there. Since the very beginning, most of North Africa had been lost to them, the Idrīsids (172-314/789-926) holding the area further West, and the Rustamids (160-296/777-909) controlling the central Atlas. Only Ifrīqiyya (modern Tunisia) was governed by an officer of the new dynasty, but this too was granted virtual independence in the period of Hārūn al-Rashīd when Ibrāhīm b. al-Aghlab (184/800) was granted full sovereignty in the provinces, only being required to pay an annual tribute of 40,000 dinars.¹ It appears that he merely wanted to establish a friendly buffer state between Egypt and any enemies which might have threatened from the west, and this was the least expensive means of achieving this end. Apart from the heart-land of Mesopotamia, the important provinces of the 'Abbāsīd Empire were Egypt and Syria, and Hījāz in the west, Baḥrayn and Baṣra in the south, and the various

1. Kamil, VI, 113.

regions of the east; these the Caliphs from earliest times made every possible effort to retain and control.¹

However with the passage of time it became apparent that such far-flung possessions could not all be held with security. Beginning with Ḥarūn al-Rashīd and continuing under al-Ma'mūn and his successors one can notice a concentration of attention on those regions which were felt to be essential to the survival of the Caliphate, and a relaxation of the grip on certain others.

1. Thus, al-Manṣūr was unsparing in his efforts to suppress the revolts which broke out in Khurasan and other eastern regions after the murder of Abū Muslim. He adopted the same measures against the uprisings in Medina and in Baṣra. His son and successor, al-Mahdī was equally energetic in his efforts to maintain the integrity of the Empire.

A. Al-Sawād

1. Baghdad

After the removal of the Caliph to Samarra a new relationship with the governors of Baghdad came into being. In 237/851 Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir received the prefecture of the city in addition to his authority over several other regions in the Sawād,¹ which implies that the Ṭāhirids had even begun to exert their power over the most strategic province in the Empire. But this appointment may also have had among its purposes the suppression of Turkish influence in Samarra, as well as strengthening the loyalty of the Ṭāhirids.²

Al-Muntaṣir appears to have been very eager to maintain a good relationship with Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh, who was to become the mainstay of the Caliphate and to enjoy the Caliph's confidence while still wielding his own authority. As soon as al-Muntaṣir had despatched Waṣīf's army to the Byzantine frontiers, he sent a letter to Muḥammad informing him of the situation and ordering him to deliver copies of the letter to the various provinces, encouraging the inhabitants to join the army and to wage war against the infidels.³ Shortly after, when he had dismissed his potential successors, al-Muntaṣir sent another long letter to Muḥammad telling him about the situation within Samarra, and copies

1. Tab., III, 1411.

2. C. Brockelmann, p. 133.

3. Tab., III, 1481, 1485.

of this letter, too, were ordered to be sent to the provinces.¹ The reply made to these letters is not known, nor do we know what attitude was taken by Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh with regard to the Caliph's dealing with his two potential successors.

This correspondence is evidence of the good relations between the Caliph and his vice-regent, and, indeed, it was in the interest of both parties to maintain such friendships. On the Ṭāhirid side, there was an obvious advantage to them in maintaining in power the Caliph from whom they had already received such marks of favour and whose precarious position was an assurance of their own pre-eminence. To what extent, if at all, the Caliph endeavoured to use the influence of the prefecture of Baghdad against the increasing power of his Turkish officers is not known, nor is there any information about the attitude of Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh towards the intensification of Turkish power at the court. Clearly he could not be content with the influence exerted by the Turkish officers on the Caliph, and his uneasiness on this matter explains the attitude of his followers immediately after the nomination of al-Musta'īn to the Caliphate.² Al-Ya'qūbī mentions that the supporters of al-Musta'īn were very much afraid of the governor of Khurāsān, Ṭāhir b. 'Abd Allāh and felt relief upon hearing the news of his death in 248/861-2.³ But, again, there is no clear evidence that either this

1. Tab., III, 1489-95.

2. Tab., III, 1503-1505.

3. Yaqubi, III, 180; cf. Tab., III, 1505.

governor or his agent in Baghdad had supported the rebellion in the capital.

The Caliph al-Musta'in, on hearing the news of Tāhir's death, immediately appointed the latter's son Muḥammad governor of Khurāsān, and the two Holy cities were added to his brother Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh's governorship over Baghdad and ma'āwin al-Sawād.¹ Al-Ya'qūbī considers this nomination to be the result of a conspiracy amongst the Turkish officers against Muḥammad b. Tāhir whom they wanted to expel from Baghdad.² Al-Ṭabarī does not refer to this account and gives the impression that the Caliph was content with the administration of the Tāhirids both in Baghdad and in Khurāsān and that the offer of this power to Banū Tāhir was meant as a sign of respect and honour.³ If it was the intention of the Turks to remove Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir from Baghdad, as they eventually succeeded in doing, the question arises why did they not themselves take over the rulership of Baghdad which was of such great importance to them? It may be true that they were displeased at his stay in Baghdad but the Caliph, on the other hand, did not dare object to the Turks' demands to remove him from Khurāsān in spite of the mutual respect which existed between the Caliph and the governor. Thus, under pressure from the

1. Tab., III, 1506; Kamil, VII, 77.

2. Yaqubi, III, 180. Al-Ya'qūbī clearly states that Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir refused at first to accept this honour because his brother Tāhir had already nominated his son Muḥammad to the governorship of Khurāsān.

3. Tab., III, 1506.

Turks, al-Musta'īn was forced to follow this policy towards the Tāhirids.

It is noteworthy that Muḥammad b. Tāhir did not interfere with the 'amma riot in Baghdad in 249/863, even though the houses of two of his scribes were plundered.¹ This does not necessarily imply that he was sympathetic towards them or that he supported their actions against either the Caliph or the Turkish mercenaries; he was probably merely awaiting orders from Samarra before committing himself to action. It may be that since this revolt was directed against the Turkish supremacy and not against himself, he felt he could remain aloof from it. But in so doing he would put at risk his reputation amongst the inhabitants of the city. The best interpretation that can be placed on his attitude is that he wanted to present himself as a mere agent of the Caliph who would only act on his master's orders. The same attitude can be seen both in the Tāhirids' military actions in Khurāsān, which will be discussed later, and in their attitudes towards the revolts in the Sawād region.²

This type of co-operation between the Caliphs and the governors of Baghdad was to the advantage of both the Caliphs and their representatives. The Caliph wanted Baghdad to remain peaceful in order to secure his position in Samarra because any uprising or riot in the one would soon threaten his own position in the other. As for the Tāhirids, loyalty

1. Tab., III, 1511; Kamil, VII, 79-80.

2. Yaqubi, III, 182; Tab., III, 1516, 1523.

to Samarra meant the continuation of their power not only in Iraq but also in Khurāsān.

Attention has already been drawn to the role of Muḥammad b. Tāhir in supporting the Caliph al-Musta'īn against al-Mu'tazz. Muḥammad took over the direction of affairs in Baghdad during the second siege of the city and all correspondence carried his name or was addressed to him personally instead of to the Caliph al-Musta'īn. One must bear in mind that at the beginning of the war between Baghdad and Samarra, Ibn Tāhir actively supported al-Musta'īn against al-Mu'tazz. But during the course of the war Ibn Tāhir betrayed his master by making a secret agreement with al-Mu'tazz aimed at the dismissal of al-Musta'īn from the Caliphate. Ibn Tāhir was probably anxious to bring about an end to the siege because he had begun to recognize that his forces were not in a position to win the war against Samarra. Al-Ṭabarī places the blame on him for the weakening of his army's position by distributing his forces over too wide an area, thereby offering the enemy a choice of weak points to attack. Ibn Tāhir was advised by one of his generals, Abū al-Sāj, that in order to win the battle he should not let his officers become scattered over a wide area; but he refused to accept this advice and pointedly told the leader, "I have my own plan."¹

There certainly must have been some deterioration in the position of al-Musta'īn which persuaded Ibn Tāhir to

1. Tab., III, 1596.

end his support of his cause; Ibn Ṭāhir's own concern, of course, was to retain his power in Baghdad, and in order to do this he surrendered on the terms laid down by Samarra. There is a curious explanation offered by Ṭābari, who has it that under the influence of his Persian advisers, Ibn Ṭāhir lost confidence in the competence of the Arabs as soldiers. When the troops of al-Raqqā¹ were defeated by the Turks, he is reported to have said, "What use are the Arabs now, without the Prophet and divine aid?"² Although this statement needs a thorough investigation and careful study, it gives the impression that this leader had no confidence in his soldiers' ability and that he seemed ready to put forward terms for a peaceful settlement with the authorities of Samarra in order to gain favour with them.³

On the death of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir, al-Mu'tazz seems to have favoured his brother 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir and he appointed him governor of Baghdad; however, Ṭāhir b. Muḥammad, the ruler of Khurāsān and the eastern provinces, too, was himself very anxious to fill this office.⁴ Even if some suspicion concerning the authenticity of this statement can be entertained, it shows that the governorship

1. Al-Raqqā, one of the chief cities of upper Mesopotamia commanding the Syrian frontier, is located on the bank of the Euphrates. Le Strange, pp. 101-103.

2. Tab., III, 1578; Kamil, VII, 57.

3. Shortly after the end of the war the Caliph al-Mu'tazz bestowed his favour on this governor and extended his authority over the other parts of the Sawād. Tab., III, 1656.

4. Tab., III, 1656; cf. Yaqubī, III, 185.

of Baghdad was considered of greater importance than that of Khurāsān, for whoever held it would be in a position to extend his influence over the other regions as well. The Caliph had also sought support from the Tāhirids in Khurāsān in suppressing the power of the Turkish officers. Troops were sent by the governor of Khurāsān to the capital, but, unable to enter Samarra, they had been diverted to Baghdad.¹ The leader of this military band, Sulaymān b. 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir became the commander of the garrison of Baghdad sāhib al-shurṭa fī Baghdad.² 'Ubayd Allāh and Sulaymān expressed their loyalty to the 'Abbāsids by quelling all disturbances both within Baghdad and throughout the Sawād.

As soon as al-Muhtadī was elevated to the throne, a riot broke out in Baghdad and Abū Aḥmad b. al-Mutawakkil, who was in exile in the city, was detained in the house of Sulaymān b. Tāhir,³ though it is not clear from the sources why this was done. It may be that he intended to nominate him as successor to his brother, al-Mu'tazz; but against this must be weighed the fact that no proclamation of his right of accession was made even to the people of Baghdad who strongly supported him. It is equally probable that Sulaymān may have received a secret message from the new Caliph asking him to keep under observation this senior 'Abbāsīd dignitary who could be considered as the most

1. Yaqubi, III, 185.

2. Tab., III, 1706.

3. Tab., III, 1714-15.

dangerous rival to his throne. Sulaymān, in any case, remained loyal to al-Muhtadī and enjoyed his confidence,¹ as a result of which he was made the prefect of Baghdad and the Sawād, in 256/869-70. As a further mark of his favour, the Caliph sent him more robes of honour than had been sent to 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir.² Apart from this incident we have no information concerning the attitude of the prefect of Baghdad during the short reign of this Caliph, nor was this to become clear even during the Caliph's final confrontation with the Turks.

It is permissible to infer that both the Caliphs and the governors of Baghdad seem to have been content with their mutual relationship. The Caliphs did not intend to deprive them of their privileges and they, in turn, had no desire to enlarge their powers at their masters' expense. The authority of the governors of Baghdad continued to be derived from the Caliph, except during the second siege of the city. It was valuable to maintain the Tāhirids in Baghdad where they could use their influence on certain elements of the 'Abbāsid troops stationed there who regarded them as a source of stability in the confused circumstances of the times. The Tāhirids saw the advantage of remaining aloof from the struggles going on in Samarra, and the benefits of this policy may be seen in the fact that the Turks did not take control of Baghdad even when they were presented with the opportunity to do so during the riot which the supporters of the Tāhirids provoked in Samarra and Baghdad at the very beginning of al-Musta'in's reign.

1. Tab., III, 1715, 1725-34.

2. Tab., III, 1791; cf. Ibar, III, 295.

2. Al-Anbār and al-Madā'in.¹

These two towns were within the jurisdiction of Baghdad, administered either directly by the governor of the latter or by his agent. Attempts were made to have them brought into the orbit of Samarra during the period of the civil war, when Baghdad was at its weakest; but eventually they were returned to their former position.

Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh had sent Najūbat b. Qays, one of his military leaders, with contingents of the A'rāb to fight the revolt in al-Anbār, ordering him to remain stationed in the area after quelling the riot. Meanwhile, he also dispatched Abū al-Sāj to al-Madā'in to suppress the revolt there and win this city over to the side of Baghdad.² The authorities in Samarra were observing the situation in these two cities very carefully, being anxious not to lose their former influence, especially over al-Anbār because of its strategic position. Whoever controlled it would be able to threaten the economic as well as the political and military life of Baghdad; for the main imports of the city from the western provinces and the north had to pass through this area.

By controlling al-Anbār, Samarra would feel a sense of security and mastery over the situation, enabling her to impose her own terms on Baghdad. Therefore, al-Mu'tazz

1. Al-Madā'in, a medieval town or rather a group of towns in Iraq (Babylonia) about twenty miles south east of Baghdad lying on either side of the Tigris in two almost equal portions. EI¹, s.v. Al-Madā'in; Le Strange, pp. 33-35, 67, 190, 224.

2. Tab., III, 1599 ff.

took/advantage of the circumstances in the city and sent a military expedition to take charge. When Najūbat heard about these manoeuvres, he broke the dikes of the Euphrates allowing the water to flow into the ditch around the city which soon overflowed and covered the whole of the surrounding plain. At the same time he sent a message to Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir asking him to send reinforcements. The army of Samarra, which was marching towards the area, clashed with these troops which were coming from Baghdad to reinforce Najūbat's position in Anbār, and defeated them.¹ As soon as Najūbat learned of this, he destroyed the bridge leading into the most exposed part of the city so as to prevent it from being entered by the Samarran troops. But despite these apparent preparations for resistance, he did not risk an encounter with the enemy; instead, he abandoned the city to the Samarrans and returned to Baghdad. When al-Anbār entered on 23 Jumādā I 251/8 June 865,² the inhabitants were given an assurance of protection and ordered to open their shops and continue with their daily business once again.³ This event was advantageous for both the citizens as well as the Samarrans, because two days later a number of ships arrived in the city from al-Raqqā carrying flour, oil and other necessary materials which were of great importance in alleviating the critical economic situation.⁴

1. Tab., III, 1601; Kamil, VII, 101; Ibar, III, 288.

2. Tab., III, 1601-2; Kamil, VII, 101-3.

3. Tab., III, 1604; Kamil, VII, 102; Ibar, III, 288-9.

4. Tab., III, 1604-5; Kamil, VII, 102.

Al-Anbār then became the strategic point from which could be launched activities against other towns which lay on the route of advance towards Baghdad. When Abū Naṣr b. Bughā, the military commander of the troops of Samarra, took over the administration of al-Anbār he coerced the scattered villages in the area into submission. During Ramaḍān 251/October-November 865, his troops defeated the forces of Abū al-Sāj who had been dispatched from Madā'in to stop the advance of the Samarran troops, and forced them to retreat back to the city. Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir sent another contingent to reinforce Abū al Sāj, hoping to save Madā'in from the fate of al-Anbār, but this was to prove of no avail. The Turkish troops defeated these new forces too, and, finally, entered the city itself.¹

The loss to Baghdad of these two cities was not to last very long. As soon as the peace settlement between Baghdad and Samarra came into force, Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir was able to restore his power over them; he again appointed Abū al-Sāj as his agent in the ma'āwin al-Furāt, and this time the latter was successful in driving the Turks out of the region,² and taking the administration into his own hands.

1. Tab., VI, 1624-5; Kamil, VII, 104.

2. Tab., III, 1656-7.

3. Kūfa

Located on the fringe of the desert, Kūfa was important because of the rôle it played in the early history of the expansions and the prestige this attached to it as one of the first capital cities of the Muslims.¹ The city had remained quiet during the short reign of al-Muntaṣir and the first two years of his successor, al-Musta'īn, but in 250/864² the 'Alid Abū al-Ḥusayn Yaḥyā b. 'Umar b. al-Ḥusayn b. Zayd b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Tālib led a revolt against the 'Abbāsid dynasty, proclaiming his own right to the Caliphate. Economic factors seem to have been the main reasons behind the move,³ and because he failed to get the money he needed, he moved from Samarra to Kūfa⁴ where he probably expected to find greater support for his cause. He

1. Yaqut, Buldan, IV, 322-7.

2. Cf. Muruḥ, VII, 330, where al-Mas'ūdī states that the first appearance of Yaḥyā b. 'Alī was in 248/862.

3. Yaḥyā had been in economic difficulties during the reign of al-Mutawakkil, and when he went to Samarra to inform 'Umar b. Faraj, the official responsible for the affairs of the Tālibids, instead of receiving help he was put in prison where he remained until the first year of al-Musta'īn's reign. He was then released on the intercession of his family. He moved to Baghdad, then returned to Samarra where he approached Waṣīf and informed him of his poverty and the oppression which he had suffered, only to receive abuse, and dismissal with the words "What sort of things can be given to a man like you?" (meaning to a disloyal man). Tab., III, 1516; Miskawayh, VI, 567; TBN, fol. 100a; cf. Yaqubi, III, 182.

4. In Maqatil, p. 639, Isfahānī states that after his failure in getting the money he moved to Baghdad where he stayed for a certain length of time. He then moved to Kūfa and started campaigning for the riqā min āl Muḥammad.

attracted supporters both from the city and the surrounding area, especially from among the A'rāb, who were resentful of the superiority which had been usurped by the Turks. These A'rābs seem to have formed the main body of his adherents.¹ H.A.R. Gibb understands this to have been a Shī'ite insurrection: "After the civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn, a shī'ite rebellion in Kūfa in 815 found general support among the bedouins of northern Arabia and the desert fringes of Iraq. From then onwards bedouin movements became increasingly associated with the profession of Shī'ism in one or other of its sectarian varieties, and more especially of activists."²

The governor of Kūfa, Ayyūb b. al-Ḥasan b. Mūsā al-Ḥāshimī, intimidated by the growing strength of Yahyā, left the city and camped with his forces on its outskirts, allowing Yahyā to enter it without encountering any opposition. He immediately confiscated the bayt al-māl,³ and after expelling all the employees of the Caliph, brought Kūfa under his own

1. Tab., III, 1516-7; Miskawayh, VI, 568; Muntazam, XII, 13a.

2. H.A.R. Gibb, "The Caliphate and the Arab States", A History of the Crusades, I, 83.

3. The amount of money in the bayt al-māl is believed to have been two thousand dinar and seventy thousand dirham, in addition to other valuables. Tab., III, 1517; Ibn Junghūl, III, 279a; cf. Yaqubī, III, 182; Maqatil, p. 640: Iṣfahānī adds that Yahyā forced the money dealers to hand over the money which they held on behalf of the Caliph.

control. In order to gain more support from the inhabitants of the city, the two prisons were opened and all the prisoners set free. When Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir heard of all this, he ordered his agent in the Sawād, 'Abd Allāh b. Maḥmūd al-Sarakhsī to join Ayyūb and crush this insurrection.¹ In an early engagement, Yahyā defeated and routed the forces of 'Abd Allāh b. Maḥmūd, taking as booty all the materials abandoned by the latter.²

The success of Yahyā led another 'Alid pretender to join the revolt,³ and this increased support brought him to a strength which was seen to present an actual danger to the Caliphate. Thereupon, Ibn Ṭāhir sent yet another military contingent, under the command of al-Ḥusayn b. Ismā'īl, one of the army leaders of Baghdad, to reinforce the Caliph's troops in the area.⁴

Near the bridge leading to Kūfa, Yahyā met the forces of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Khaṭṭāb and forced him to retreat. Before Ḥusayn b. Ismā'īl could come to the aid of 'Abd al-Raḥmān, Yahyā's troops had already entered the city and fortified its approaches.⁵ Support for Yahyā continued to

1. Tab., III, 1517-8; cf. Maqatil, pp. 640-1.

2. Tab., III, 1518-9; Maqatil, pp. 640-1.

3. A group of Zaydī's joined Yahyā's revolt. Tab., III, 1519.

4. Ibn Ṭāhir designated certain distinguished generals to accompany al-Ḥusayn, among whom was Khālīd b. 'Umrān, 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Khaṭṭāb, known as Wajh al-Fīls, Abū al-Sānā' al-Ghānāwī, 'Abd Allāh b. Naṣr b. Ḥamza, Sa'īd al-Dabābī, Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl, who was one of Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm's followers and a group of Khāṣṣa of the Khurāsāniyya. Tab., III, 1518; Miskawayh, VI, 566-9.

5. Maqatil, pp. 643-4.

grow and had even reached into Baghdad itself,¹ and it became a matter of the greatest urgency that the revolt be crushed. A constant stream of reinforcements was sent to the imperial troops in the neighbourhood of Kūfa.²

Yahyā collected his troops and, ill-advisedly, gave battle outside the walls of Kūfa to the greatly strengthened forces of the Caliph. The defeat he suffered marked the end of his revolt; he himself was captured and slain.³ The successful suppression of this revolt released the Caliph from the fear and uncertainty it engendered about his own position, and restored Kūfa to his authority. Although this uprising failed to achieve its objectives, its example was to teach others to seek popular support in their opposition to the establishment; and the increasingly parlous state of the nation at the time encouraged such adventurers to think that they could succeed where their predecessors had failed.

In 251/865-6, about the time the war between Baghdad and Samarra was coming to an end, another 'Alid uprising took place in Kūfa under the leadership of al-Husayn b. Muḥammad b. Ḥamza b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-Husayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Tālib. The Caliph al-Musta'īn, who in the struggle to retain his

1. Miskawayh, VI, 568, leaves no doubt that he had great support among the 'amma of Baghdad.

2. Tab., III, 1519. Even al-Musta'īn had sent forces under the command of his Turkish generals. Yaqubi, III, 182; Tab., III, 1523; see also Miskawayh, VI, 570.

3. His severed head was sent to Samarra, and later to Baghdad, to be put on public display. In Baghdad this produced a hostile reaction from the people, one of whom cried out to Ibn Tāhir, "What would the Prophet say to this outrage on his own flesh and blood." Tab., III, 1520, 1522-23. It would seem from this that Yahyā enjoyed some support in Baghdad, also.

throne was in Baghdad at the time, ordered Muzāḥim b. Khāqān to march against the rebel. Al-Ḥusayn, meanwhile, had increased his forces with contingents from the tribes, who saw this as an opportunity to register their own protest against the Caliph and his Turkish soldiery.¹

Aḥmad b. Naṣr b. Mālik al-Khuzā'ī, the governor of Kūfa, was forced to flee from the city after the murder of several of his soldiers at the hands of the rebel and his followers, and Kūfa once again separated herself from the centre of power and came under the rule of a new 'Alid pretender.² Ibn Khāqān, who had been sent to reinforce the position of the governor and to co-operate with him in restoring order, initially had no intention of using force to suppress the rebellion, but intended, rather, to persuade al-Ḥusayn to acknowledge the 'Abbāsids right to rule.³ This is to be seen from the fact that he sent a delegation to Kūfa with instructions for negotiating a peaceful settlement; but when no reply was forthcoming he decided to fight the outlaws and restore 'Abbāsid authority in the city.⁴ Despite the enthusiastic support given him by the inhabitants of the

1. Tab., III, 1617; Kamil, VII, 110; Ibn Kathir, XI, 9.

2. Tab., III, 1617-8; Kamil, VII, 110; cf. Maqatil, p. 665. Iṣfahānī states that when the rebel felt insecure at the arrival of Ibn Khāqān he left the city and hid himself from the enemy.

3. Tab., III, 1618.

4. In Maqatil, p. 665, Iṣfahānī states that as soon as al-Ḥusayn learned about this army he left for Samarra and he reached the capital at the time homage was being paid to the new Caliph al-Mu'tazz. Al-Ḥusayn too paid his homage to the Caliph and stayed in Samarra for a while.

city, al-Ḥusayn did not feel equal to continuous battle with the massive 'Abbāsid army; instead, he abandoned the struggle and fled into hiding, leaving the victory to the 'Abbāsids.¹ He was to appear once again in Kūfa, leading another uprising against the Caliph, al-Mu'tamid; this too failed, and he was taken captive and imprisoned (269/882).²

In 252/866 an unidentified person from the Ṭālibiyyīn departed from Baghdad with a group of Shākiriyya heading for Kūfa.³ Maqatil, (p. 665) gives his name as Muḥammad b. Ja'far b. al-Ḥusayn, who used to be the deputy of the rebel al-Ḥusayn. Our sources, as usual, remain silent about the reasons underlying the move, but, judging by subsequent events, it would seem that he was intending to raise an army against the Caliph, who was accused of being unable to manage the affairs of the Muslims adequately. The rebel was deceived by a proposal from Ibn Ṭāhir that he should be given the government of the city; however, when he accepted this, he was easily captured, put in chains and sent to Samarra.⁴

During the last years of al-Mu'tazz' reign more trouble

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1. After the defeat of the rebels, Muzāḥim set fire to the two main districts of the city, destroying seven shopping centres. This badly affected the economic life of the city. Tab., III, 1618. Another (pro-Shī'ite) account says that in addition to the above, Muzāḥim gave orders to set fire to thousands of houses. Tab., III, 1619; Muntazam, XII, 20a.
 2. Maqatil, p. 665; cf. Tab., III, 1620.
 3. Tab., III, 1683; Kamil, VII, 118.
 4. Tab., III, 1683-4.

broke out in Kūfa under the leadership of two descendants of al-Ḥusayn.¹ They murdered the governor of the city and seized his power; in response to which the Caliph al-Mu'tazz sent an army there under Sa'īd b. Ṣālih al-Ḥājib which so alarmed the followers of these military opportunists that they immediately deserted them. Deprived thus of any hope of success, the two fled into hiding, and Kūfa was again quiet for a while.²

During the short reign of the Caliph al-Muḥtadī, 'Alī b. Zayd b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Īsā b. Zayd b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib³ led yet another revolt in Kūfa which was mainly supported by the 'āmma and the A'rāb. It was suppressed by an army under the command of al-Shāh b. al-Miykāl sent by the Caliph, in the course of which 'Alī b. Zayd lost his life.⁴

Three features of these revolts in Kūfa are of particular interest: firstly, all the leaders of the uprisings claimed to be of 'Alid descent, from which it may be inferred that such a genealogy would attract support to them in this region in which was one of the holy places of the Shī'a. Secondly, a significant part of the support for revolution came from the A'rāb, who may have thought that the Caliphs were not

1. They were 'Īsā b. Ja'far and 'Alī b. Zayd. Tab., III, 1709; Muruḥ, VII, 402; according to Iṣfahānī, the latter did not appear until the reign of al-Muḥtadī. Maqatīl, pp. 675-76, 679.

2. Muruḥ, VII, p. 402.

3. Presumably, he is the same 'Alī b. Zayd who provoked the previous revolt, although the latter is described as a Ḥusaynī and he would obviously be Zaydī.

4. Maqatīl, pp. 675-6.

representing them any more and that the Turkish supremacy would mean the ultimate end of their own rôle in the state.¹ Thirdly, the fact that the insurrections kept breaking out shows how disaffected this idea of the Islamic heart-land had become, and also, how apparent it was to all that the Caliphate was sinking into such weakness and impotence that each new venture seemed assured of success.

1. Some of those were probably the A'rāb who had deserted Samarra because of the intolerant Turkish policy.

Nu'mān Thābit, p. 209.

4. The Southern Region of the Sawād and Baḥrayn

Apart from the trouble which had taken place in Baṣra and the nearby area during the reign of al-Mu'taṣim,¹ this region remained quiet and almost totally aloof from the anarchy which dominated the 'Abbāsid Capital. The sources at our disposal do not throw any light on the type of relationship which existed between Samarra and the region concerned, but one may presume that this region remained loyal and obedient to the 'Abbāsid regime, regardless of certain opportunists who attempted to isolate this province from the Capital. Baṣra was of great importance to the Caliph because it was the only port through which merchandise could pass on its way to the Capital. Therefore anyone who could bring the city under his command would be able to control the trade route to and from the Muslim Capital,² and for this reason the Caliphs may have attempted to retain their power over this city whatever the cost.

In 249/863 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm³ left Samarra and headed for Baḥrayn where he intended to cause disturbances. There he claimed he was 'Alī b. Muḥammad b. Faḍl b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Ubayd Allāh b. al-'Abbās b. 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.⁴ This honourable descent helped him to gather a considerable number of malcontents round him for use in his own personal cause.

1. Yaqubi, III, 163; Tab., III, 1166-9.

2. B. Lewis, Arabs in History, pp. 88-9.

3. F. Sāmīr, Thawrat al-Zanj, Baghdad, 1971, pp. 51-64; EI², s.v. 'Alī b. Muḥammad; EI¹, s.v. Zandj.

4. Tab., III, 1743; Kamil, VII, 140; cf. Ibar, III, 301.

The Bedouins, who had already associated themselves with the Shī'a pretenders, with the intention of putting an end to the Turkish supremacy in particular and the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate in general, felt that joining 'Alī b. Muḥammad was an opportunity not to be missed. At first they succeeded in winning over the majority of the inhabitants of Baḥrayn; but conversely, the increased numbers led to internal conflict among the citizens themselves because of their divergent opinions concerning the leadership. Consequently a real dispute arose amongst the inhabitants of Hajar, the capital of the region.¹ But those who supported 'Alī b. Muḥammad came to consider him as a prophet; they collected the kharāj for him and carried out his orders indiscriminately.² Despite the differences of opinion among the citizens of Baḥrayn and the trouble which occurred in Hajar, they all stood firm in the face of the Caliph's army which was sent to suppress this anti-'Abbāsīd uprising. Eventually the Caliph's troops succeeded in gaining control in Hajar while the rebel and his supporters fled to a nearby place in the desert.³

It is beyond the scope of this study to go into detail about the nature of this revolt but it is probable that this adventurer at first used his 'Alid descent as a means to gain power in order to challenge the 'Abbāsīd dynasty itself and later he probably found that the easiest way to succeed

1. Yaqut, Buldan, IV, 953; cf. F. Sāmīr, pp. 56-57.

2. Tab., III, 1743; Kamil, VII, 140; Ibn Kathīr, XI, 18.

3. Tab., III, 1744; Ibar, III, 302.

in a rural society such as Bahrayn was to stress his 'Alid genealogy. At first he succeeded in doing so but later he did not mention his descent so often, especially when it was revealed that his claim was false and that he was using it solely for his own political goals.¹ One must not overlook the fact that shortly after he started his military activities against the 'Abbāsids in the southern part of the Sawād, he was completely successful in winning the support of the black slaves who worked as peasants in the saltpetre-producing area. For this reason he became potentially very dangerous to the Caliph who took immediate steps to suppress this revolt, but which took the 'Abbāsid dynasty nearly fifteen years to accomplish (255-270/869-884/5).

After his defeat in Hajar 'Alī b. Muḥammad moved from place to place and eventually travelled towards Baṣra where he stayed with the tribe of Banū Zabī'a among whom he won many supporters. In 254/867-8 he took advantage of the unstable situation in the city, which had deteriorated with the continuous fighting between the two tribal groups, i.e. Hilāliyya and Sa'diyya, and sent a delegation of four men to persuade one of the parties to support him. When his men informed the citizens of Baṣra of his intentions and asked them to join their leader 'Alī b. Muḥammad against the 'Abbāsid rulers, nobody accepted the proposition. The jund of the city, who had been informed of this delegation, attempted to have the four men imprisoned but they failed to

1. Tab., III, 1745; Ibar, III, 302-3; cf. F. Sāmīr, p. 56.

get hold of them. As soon as the delegation had reported back to their leader, he, with the rest of his sympathisers, left the city seeking a secure and suitable region from which to conduct his anti-‘Abbāsid campaign.¹ The governor of the city, however, had severely punished those citizens of Baṣra whose inclinations tended towards the rebels, and finally a considerable number of them were imprisoned.

Unlike the rebel in Kūfa this adventurer was not encouraged by the citizens of Baṣra, who remained loyal and faithful to the central government despite its obvious weakness and domination by the Turkish soldiers, and who were unlike the inhabitants of Hajar who had praised and enthusiastically encouraged ‘Alī b. Muḥammad to oppose the ‘Abbāsids. On the contrary, the inhabitants of Baṣra seem to have had more of a desire to suppress this revolt than did the official forces. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad found no refuge in Baṣra and therefore left the place in secret. Later he was discovered and captured by the ‘Abbāsid troops and taken to Wāṣit where he was imprisoned. But ‘Alī b. Muḥammad succeeded in deceiving the governor of the city, who set him free.²

The number of his followers in the southern part of the Sawād had increased rapidly; therefore after staying almost a year in Baghdad he returned to the former region and, immediately after his arrival, the governor of Ubulla³ was

1. Tab., III, 1745 ff.; Ibar, III, 302; Ibn Kathir, XI, 19; F. Sāmīr, pp. 57-58.

2. Tab., III, 1749; Kamil, VII, 139; Ibn Kathir, XI, 3.

3. Ubulla was an unhealthy town which lay on the estuary on the north side of its canal. The Muslims built Baṣra further inland, hence nearer to the desert than

forced to move out of the city and leave it at the mercy of 'Alī b. Muḥammad.¹

Shortly after, the troops who were stationed in Ubulla had a direct confrontation with the rebels, whose forces were victorious.² This victory, however, encouraged the insurgent's army of slaves to increase their military campaigns in order to bring the whole region under their control, so that they would be able to threaten the position of the Caliph and appropriate the whole of the property belonging to the state. Immediately after, they marched towards Qādisiyya³ and plundered it on the instructions of their leader, who intended to spread fear and panic among the inhabitants of the area so that they would follow him.⁴

But the citizens of Baṣra who had remained loyal to the 'Abbāsid Caliphs had raised an army against the rebels who threatened the life of the city; but their forces met their match in the strength of their rebel opponents.⁵ The defeat of the troops of Baṣra not only threatened the

Contd.] Ubulla and made it their headquarters. Ubulla was the main part of the Sawād, during our period of study, as well as the biggest town after Baṣra. Yaqut, Buldan, I, 96-98; F. Sāmīr, p. 106.

1. Tab., III, 1751-2.

2. Kamil, VII, 143.

3. Qādisiyya is probably a small village near Baṣra because our sources mention only the Qādisiyya of Kūfa. Yaqut, Buldan, IV, 7-10. They also mention the Qādisiyya of Tigris. Le Strange, pp. 50-52.

4. Tab., III, 1753.

5. Tab., III, 1755 ff; F. Sāmīr, pp. 104-105.

life of the city itself, but also the position of the 'Abbāsids in both the Capital and the surrounding region as well. On the other hand, it did not mean the end of the natives' resistance to this revolt, but rather it encouraged them to stand firm against the rebels' ambitions and to organize more troops to suppress the conspirators. Even this second army was not in a position to quell the uprising, and at the first confrontation with the enemy they suffered heavy losses and retreated to their own city.¹

This victory was of great importance to the rebels, giving them the chance to advance towards Baṣra itself. On their way to Baṣra they plundered and set fire to the scattered villages in the area and while they were still pursuing their barbarous course they met with an army sent from the capital under the leadership of Abū Hilāl al-Turkī which, however, also failed to achieve any lasting improvement in the confused situation which obtained in that region.² The Caliph, al-Muhtadī, realized the dangerous implications of this revolt and as soon as he heard about the defeat of his forces, he dispatched another band of troops to reinforce the Caliphal army in the area. But these forces met a similar fate during their first bout of fighting with the rebels.³ Thus the rebels' achievements encouraged them to set up their own command in the area and

1. Kamil, VII, 143-4.

2. It is reported that hundreds of soldiers were put to death and a few hundred more were captured and later murdered at the command of 'Alī b. Muḥammad. Tab., III, 1765; Kamil, VII, 144.

3. Tab., III, 1766-7.

to disrupt the life of the capital, Samarra, by cutting the lines of communication between it and Baṣra, which was still outside 'Alī b. Muḥammad's command. 'Alī b. Muḥammad exerted his power in the region to such an extent that in 255/868-9 he even questioned the people returning from their pilgrimage as to whether they carried with them any sort of merchandise for the Caliph or not.¹ Thus 'Alī b. Muḥammad continued his policy of aggression against the villages and the various settlements in the area of marshes, which enabled him to strengthen his position as well as assisting him in getting to know the trade routes through the area.² On the other hand, his military actions provoked the anger and hatred of the citizens of Baṣra. Therefore they once again decided to confront his forces, in an attempt to put an end to the disturbances in the southern part of the Sawād. Despite the new forces which were sent against him, the adventurer was in a position to win the battle and continued his advance toward the city itself. However, his attempted takeover of the city failed and his army suffered heavy casualties which forced him to retreat to a safer position in the marshes.³

The people of Baṣra were heartened by this victory and on 14 Dhū al-Qi'da 255/24 October 869, they mobilized their forces in an effort to achieve a decisive victory once and for all over this opportunist and his continued military

1. Tab., III, 1768; Ibn Kathir, XI, 19.

2. Tab., III, 1769 ff.

3. Tab., III, 1783-6.

campaigns in the region. Although this was the accepted policy of the city, frustration and panic set in among the inhabitants because of the well-organized military assaults made by the Rebels on the surrounding area.¹ They came to realise that they were not in a position to win the war; therefore they sent a delegation to Samarra asking for reinforcements. As soon as the Caliph learned of the unstable situation in the southern part of the Sawād he sent an army under the command of Ju'lān al-Turkī. At the same time he appointed one of his own men as governor of Ubulla in order to secure and reinforce the position of his troops. The army which marched towards the area was followed by several regiments as rearguard support.² The Caliph's troops failed to win the battle because of their ignorance of the nature of the battlefield. The troops were comprised mostly of horsemen which made it difficult to fight in an area covered by hundreds of canals.³

Shortly after their victory over the imperial troops, the rebels captured and confiscated the cargoes of twenty-four ships which had come to Baṣra from various parts of the world carrying several kinds of valuable materials for the Capital.⁴ The easy acquisition of these spoils together with their recent victory over the Caliph's troops

1. Tab., III, 1779-80.

2. Tab., III, 1783-6.

3. Tab., III, 1786; Kamil, VII, 163; F. Sāmīr believes that the weakness of Ju'lān was the main reason for this defeat. F. Sāmīr, p. 105.

4. Tab., III, 1834.

encouraged the rebels to achieve further victories, and on 22 Rajab 256/16 June 870, while the Caliph, al-Muhtadī, was engaged in his struggle with the Turkish mercenaries, the adventurer's army marched on Ubulla, entered it and set fire to it. When the citizens of 'Abbādān¹ heard about his brutal assault on Ubulla and the defeat of the Caliph's army, they immediately recognized his supremacy and guaranteed the rebel their loyalty and obedience.² From Ubulla he advanced towards al-Ahwāz³ and after only a few clashes with the small contingent from the city he entered it and captured the governor.⁴ In 257/870-1 'Alī b. Muḥammad and his troops entered Basra itself after a period of heavy fighting.⁵

By the time of the Caliph al-Mu'tamid's reign, 'Alī b. Muḥammad had become intensely dangerous and a threat to the

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1. The town of 'Abbādān was on the seaboard on one side and Sulaymānān at the other on the Dujayl estuary. 'Abbādān still exists but now lies up the estuary more than twenty miles from the present coastline of the Gulf. It was inhabited by mat-weavers who used the Ḥalfā grass of the island for their trade; and there were great guard houses round the town for the protection of the southern part of the estuary. Yaqut, Buldan, III, 597-8; Le Strange, pp. 48-9.
 2. Tab., III, 1837.
 3. Al-Ahwāz is a town situated on the Kārūn river where it cuts through a low sandstone ridge (on the Khuzistān plain). Ahwāz continued to prosper under the Umayyad and 'Abbāsids and it was the centre of extensive sugar plantations, but the serious Zanj rebellion caused a decline towards the close of the 3rd/9th Century. Yaqut, Buldan, I, 410-14; EI², s.v. Al-Ahwāz.
 4. Tab., III, 1837-8.
 5. Tab., III, 1847-57.

whole Empire because of his strategic position and the number of fighters who had joined him. Therefore, the Caliph concentrated all his efforts on suppressing the revolt; but he succeeded only after a long and continuous fight with the rebel.¹

Basra, which was the main city in the southern part of the Sawād seems to have remained faithful to the Caliphs despite its weak position. Meanwhile, 'Alī b. Muḥammad failed several times to win the inhabitants of the city over to his cause even after their final defeat in 257/870. The Caliphs, who were involved in their struggle to maintain their position and to secure the throne for their dynasty, had sent several contingents of troops to the area in order to suppress the revolt and restore security and safety to the region. Although 'Alī b. Muḥammad had gained the support of the peasants in the area, because they hoped to improve their harsh economic situation through him, he failed to achieve the ultimate object of his ambitious plans, to bring the whole area under his control.

1. Tab., III, 1832 ff.

B. Al-Jazīra

This region is of great importance in the history of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate not only because of its agricultural production but also because of its strategic position on the main trade routes.¹ The area had recently been involved in many political and military manoeuvres which even threatened the authority of the Caliphs in Baghdad. Most of these revolts occurred under the Kharijite adventurers.² During the reign of al-Wāthiq the region once again became unsettled and it is reported that Muḥammad b. 'Amr al-Shaybānī led a revolt in Diyār Rabī'a,³ advancing from there to Mawsil where he was defeated and taken prisoner to Samarra before being put to death.⁴

This defeat did not mean the end of the trouble in the area but rather, it marked the beginning of many military campaigns directed against the central government. The deterioration of the situation in the capital had for some time been an open invitation to adventurers to show their power and to gain more political prestige. Therefore in 248/861-2, during the short reign of al-Muntaṣir, Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Khārijī brought the area around Mawsil under his own authority. He not only succeeded in conquering the land but also in gaining for his cause the sympathy and support

1. Yaqubi, III, 118-9; Tab., III, 631, 638, 649; Azdi, pp. 279-80, 299.

2. B. Lewis, Arabs in History, p. 88.

3. EI², s.v. Diyār Rabī'a; Le Strange, pp. 101-8.

4. Yaqubi, III, 171.

of the inhabitants.¹ His successful political and military activities, however, seriously threatened the economic and political situation in the capital. Therefore, as soon as the Caliph heard about this revolt he sent an army under the leadership of Ishāq b. Thābit al-Farghānī to stem the trouble. Ishāq, however, succeeded in suppressing this uprising only after its leader was taken captive.² Al-Mas'ūdī mentions more trouble which broke out in the vicinity of Mawsil and Bawāzīj³ at the instigation of Abū al-'Amūd al-Shārī who retained some power over the region for a short while. His manoeuvres seem to have proved very dangerous to the Caliph of Samarra, because al-Shārī had already gained the support of a considerable number of Kurds as well as the tribe of Rabī'a.⁴ Al-Muntaṣir ordered Sīmā al-Turkī to lead the Caliphal army against this rebel and despite the strategic position of the anti-government forces, the Caliph's army achieved a victory and put an end, at least for the time being, to the trouble in the region.⁵

1. Dhahabī, Tarikh, XIII, 36a.

2. Tab., III, 1500; Muntazam, VII, 2a; Nujum, II, 326. It is noteworthy that Ibn al-Athīr who is our main source of information about this region does not make any reference to this revolt: Kamil, VII, 66-76.

3. Bawāzīj: a place near Tikrīt located on the River Zāb. Yaqut, Buldan, I, 750.

4. Muruj, VII, 307.

5. Muruj, VII, 307-8; Yaqubi, III, 180, considers that this revolt took place during the beginning of the reign of al-Musta'in who sent Mankajūr al-Farghānī to suppress it, which he did successfully.

Within the limitations imposed by the material concerning the anti-‘Abbāsid revolts in the region concerned it seems likely that the main participants in these revolts were nomadic or tribal individuals of the area, supported at times by the Kurds who had settled in the nearby mountains. Tribal revolt may have been activated at this particular time because of the domination by the Turks in governmental affairs which may in one way or another have affected the authority of the nomadic Arabs who preferred to see their fellow countrymen in positions of power and therefore to some extent remained loyal to them. The Caliphs on the other hand regarded these military activities as a highly dangerous threat to their position; therefore they took immediate steps to crush any trouble as soon as it came to their notice.

The inhabitants of the region of Jazīra appear, from the series of accounts, as was the case with Kūfa, to have supported the local adventurers in taking over the command of their province. This led the Caliph's army to exercise force against the citizens themselves. But in Baṣra it was evident that the people here were the main combatants against the rebels in the area and it was the people who took the initiative in opposing any attempt to separate their city from the central government.

The weak position of the Caliphs in Samarra and their involvement in the internal struggle for power amongst the ‘Abbāsids themselves and between the ‘Abbāsids and the Turkish officers, had offered many opportunities to the various adventurers to exploit the political situation and

attempt to exert their power over these regions. Moreover, these opportunists took advantage of the existing political and ideological factions and used them as a means of gaining many supporters to their cause. For example, in Jazīra and its provinces, although personal ambition was the main reason for the uprising, it took the shape of the Khārijite movement.¹ It is beyond the scope of this study to go into detail about the origin of these revolts because to give such an account would detract from the real object of this thesis, namely to ascertain the attitude of the central government towards the revolts in the various provinces. By so doing it is hoped that a true assessment of the situation of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate will result.

In Rajab 252/August 866, Musāwir b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Shārī led a campaign from his headquarters in Bawāzīj against the commander of the garrison, ṣāhib al-shurṭa of Mawṣil because of the latter's seduction of Musāwir's son who was in his prison.² Although the contemporary and near-contemporary historians do not provide us with enough information concerning the reason for this revolt, the one mentioned above may contain an element of truth. However, there may have been other causes behind the conflict between ṣāhib al-shurṭa and Musāwir connected with the struggle for power between the two of them.³ Musāwir moved to Ḥadītha⁴ where the ṣāhib al-shurṭa

1. Kamil, VII, 117; Ibar, III, 292.

2. Kamil, VII, 117; Ibar, III, 292. It was reported that Musāwir's son had secretly informed his father about the behaviour of the ṣāhib al-shurṭa.

3. Cf. S.F. Mūsīlī, Ta'rīkh al-Mūsīl, I, Miṣr, 1923, 79; Zarkalī, al-A'lām, VIII, 105.

4. Ḥadītha: A small town located on the eastern bank of the Tigris near the upper Zāb. Yaqut, Buldan, II, 222-23.

was living. As soon as the latter heard about Musāwir's advance towards the city he went into hiding. This enabled Musāwir to enter the town unresisted and free his son. This easy victory strengthened the rebel's position and encouraged other citizens in the vicinity to join him against the rulers of Samarra. This shows that the rebel's intention was not merely to set his son free or to gain revenge on the wrongdoing of ṣāhib al-shurṭa but also to extend his authority over the area and to threaten the 'Abbāsīd Caliphs. A considerable number of A'rāb and Kurds joined forces with this rebel and enthusiastically encouraged him to further action against the 'Abbāsīds. Thereafter he became increasingly powerful and advanced towards Mawṣil but failed to enter the city because of its inaccessible fortifications. On the other hand, Musāwir did succeed in bringing the area round the city under his own control. The Caliph, al-Mu'tazz, upon hearing the news of this assault, sent an army from Samarra to suppress it. As soon as Musāwir came to hear of this he left the area and went to Bawāzīj, which he thought was in a more strategic position than the nearby town, and would help him to counter the opposing army more easily.

In 253/866-7 he met and beat the Caliph's army which was forced to retreat after sustaining heavy losses.¹ This encouraged the adventurer and his supporters to advance through

1. Tab., III, 1689-90; Kamil, VII, 120-1; Ibn Kathir, XI, 12; Ibar, III, 292; Ibn Junghūl, III, 263b., 284a. It is worth mentioning that Yaqubi, III, 185 gives a different account of the beginning of this revolt. He states that Musāwir started his revolt in Diyār Rabī'a from where he moved to Mawṣil and expelled the governor.

the surrounding area and bring it under their control so that he would eventually be in a position to conquer Samarra. He reached Jalawlā',¹ where he met more troops, once again sent by the Caliph himself but this force too met with the same fate as its predecessors and failed to achieve even the least of its objectives, to stop the rebel forces advancing towards Samarra.² From here the rebel and his followers marched towards Hulwān³ where they met with strong opposition from the citizens.⁴ Al-Ṭabarī mentions that in Ramaḍān 254/September 868 the Caliph sent another army against Musāwir which also failed to suppress this revolt.⁵ Musāwir became the main power in the vicinity of the Jazīra and brought nearly all the surrounding area under his authority.

Immediately after this victory and with the ever weakening position of the Caliph's forces, Musāwir decided to invade

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1. Jalawlā': a town located on the commercial route to Khurāsān and only a distance of seven farsakh between Jalawlā' and Khānaqīn. Jalawlā' is one of the Ṭusūj of the Sawād. Yaqut, Buldan, II, 107.
 2. Tab., III, 1694; Kamil, VII, 124; Ibar, III, 292.
 3. Hulwān: a city on the border between Iraq and the district of Jibāl and on the border of the Sawād region. It was one of the six big cities in the Sawād after Kūfa, Baṣra, Wāsiṭ, Baghdad, Samarra and Hulwān. It was favoured for its agricultural products especially figs. Yaqut, Buldan, II, 316-21.
 4. Tab., III, 1690-91; Ibn Kathir, XI, 12; cf. Kamil, VII, 124-25, where Ibn al-Athīr refers to a civil war in Mawṣil between the governor and the tribal elements.
 5. Tab., III, 1697.

Mawṣil and make it the centre of his activities. The governor of the city 'Abd Allāh b. Sulaymān who had learnt about this campaign which was directed against him, had already mobilized his forces to meet this concerted challenge to his supremacy. In Jumāda I 255/April-May 869, fighting broke out between the two armies which ended in a severe defeat for the government forces.¹ The victory of Musāwir spread fear and panic among the inhabitants of the region who felt that the easiest way to gain security for themselves was to associate their cause with that of the rebel leader. Therefore, many of them joined the revolt, thus increasing its power and influence at the expense of the Caliph's authority. Ibn al-Athīr continues his account of the fighting and states that during the same year, i.e. 255/869, Musāwir entered Mawṣil.² The main reason for this victory was the cowardice of the ruler himself in facing the enemy because the citizens of the city, in the words of Ibn al-Athīr, had dissociated themselves from him and inclined towards a policy of separation from Samarra.³ It is surprising that Musāwir did not make Mawṣil his headquarters and Ibn al-Athīr considers this was due to the very crowded atmosphere in the city.⁴ But it seems that this is not necessarily the main reason which led

1. Kamil, VII, 127. Al-Ṭabarī presents different accounts stating that in 255/867 there was fighting between the Caliph's forces under the command of Yārjukh who was forced; under heavy pressure from the enemy, to retreat to Samarra. Tab., III, 1706.

2. Kamil, VII, 139.

3. Kamil, VII, 139.

4. Kamil, VII, 139.

him to desert the city and to take Ḥadīthā as his centre of activity; it may be that Musāwir had no confidence in the citizens and to avoid any possible clashes with them he moved to another nearby area.

Al-Ya'qūbī states that as soon as Musāwir had gained control of Mawsil, he turned his attention to Samarra. He led his army down towards the Capital and camped at a distance of three farsakh¹ from it. The Caliph al-Mu'tazz realized the dangers threatening his position and regularly sent forces to try and remove them from his Capital but his forces failed to achieve any significant victory, while in contrast the power of his adversary was rapidly increasing.²

The separation of Mawsil from Samarra had an adverse effect on the latter and as it was described in al-Mas'ūdī's words, "Musāwir al-Shārī became more powerful (to the extent of threatening the whole Empire) as he approached the Capital with his forces. Oppression and hunger were frequent problems there because he cut off the supplies of merchandise." He added that the A'rāb took advantage of these circumstances to start their own activities against the 'Abbāsids. Moreover, al-Mas'ūdī considers this the main reason which led the Caliph al-Muhtadī to send his army in an attempt to suppress the revolt.³ Ibn al-Athīr's view confirms al-Mas'ūdī's

1. Al-farsakh: A distance of three miles or 5760 metres. See Ahmad Rīdā, Matīn al-Lughā, IV, Beirut, 1377/1958, 386.

2. Yaqubi, III, 185-6.

3. Muruj, VIII, 8. Al-Mas'ūdī, also, considers this the main reason which led the Caliph al-Muhtadī to send his troops.

description of the situation as he wrote, "He (Musāwir) stopped sending goods (amwāl) to the Caliph which made it difficult for the soldiers in Samarra to receive their regular salaries in the normal way."¹

Musāwir, however, began to extent his authority and in Dhū al-Qi'da 255/November 869, he appointed one of his followers as vice-regent over certain regions which had already come under his control.² It must be remembered that his authority was gained at the expense of the Caliph who failed to achieve any military victory over the rebel mainly because of the weak position of the Caliphate at the time. On the other hand there was no mention of new military campaigns on the part of Musāwir at the very beginning of al-Muḥtadī's reign, as he did not start his subversive activities until 256/870 shortly before the end of this Caliph's reign. The latter, despite his involvement in the internal troubles in the capital, sent an army from Samarra under the command of Mūsā b. Bughā, Bāykabāk and Muflīḥ to suppress this revolt.³ Al-Ṭabarī states that the Caliph's order came as a result of the burning of the town of Balad near Mawṣil by the rebel soldiers.⁴ Although the Caliph's army had succeeded in altering the balance of power in the area in his favour, he failed to achieve his ultimate objectives.⁵ This so-called

1. Kamil, 156.

2. Tab., III, 1736.

3. Ibn al-Athīr speaks of other troops, sent earlier, by the Caliph, which suffered heavy casualties and were forced to retreat. Kamil, VII, 147.

4. Tab., III, 1808.

5. Tab., III, 1838-9.

victory was of great importance to the Caliph because it removed the dangers which were strangling his capital and boosted the morale of his soldiers. But as soon as the Caliph's army retreated from its position the rebel had the opportunity once more to regain control over almost all the territories he had formerly occupied. He still collected for himself the revenues from the provinces under his authority even during the time of the Caliph al-Mu'tamid.¹ In this way he continued his activities during the reign of this Caliph and his successors until eventually in 293/905 Jazīra and Mawṣil became dynasties semi-independent from the Caliphate under the Hamdānids.²

From this short and general survey of the prevailing situation in the Jazīra during the period under consideration, it is clear that continuous trouble dominated the region and was encouraged by the weak position of the Caliphs who were involved in the struggle for power both among themselves and between the 'Abbāsids and the foreign mercenaries. The leader of the revolt in Jazīra was supported and encouraged by the citizens of the region who were anxious to see it separated from the Capital. This may have meant that the 'Abbāsid Caliphate was no longer representative of their will but, rather, reflected the desires of certain Turkish officers. The Caliphs as well as the Turkish officers realized the threat to their power posed by such revolts; therefore, despite the continuous trouble in Samarra the

1. Kamil, VII, 156-7.

2. EI², s.v. Hamdānids.

Caliphs adopted a very hard line in suppressing the revolts. By and large, the main sources of combatants in this revolt were the nomadic groups of people who probably resented the supremacy of the Turks.

C. The Western Provinces

1. Syria

Syria did not long remain loyal to the 'Abbāsid Caliphate. As in other provinces several uprisings took place in this region, some of them having a political history or background dating back to the Umayyad period. This is evident, for example, in the revolt of Tamīm al-Lakham, known as al-Mubarqa', in Palestine during the reign of al-Wāthiq.¹ But most of these uprisings were a direct consequence of the brutal and savage treatment which the inhabitants of the province received at the hands of the Turkish governors.²

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1. Yaqubi, III, 169. He states that this revolt was encouraged by tribesmen from Lakham, Judham, 'Āmila and Balqīn, who advanced together towards Jordan. Ibn Taghrī Bardī claims that al-Mubarqa' who was proclaiming for the Sifyānī, succeeded in bringing the peasants to his side and made them his main body of support. He led a revolt in Palestine during the reign of al-Mu'taṣim who, after hearing of this trouble, immediately sent Rajā' al-Ḥaḍramī with forces to suppress it. Rajā' was able to quell the trouble because the peasants were more concerned with their agricultural life which deterred them from joining the rebel's troops. Nujum, II, 248-9. Al-Ya'qūbī speaks of another revolt which broke out in Damascus under the command of Ibn Bāyhas al-Kilābī whose main support was many clans of the tribe of Qays. Yaqubi, III, 169.
 2. Subkī, Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyya al-Kubrā, II, 54; cf. M.K. 'Alī, Khuṭaṭ al-Shām, I, 196. The latter, who copied Subkī, praised the governor Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī for his successful policy in settling the conflict between the Qaysiyya and Yamāniyya. But he also criticised al-Mutawakkil for allowing the Turkish rulers a free hand in administering the province, a policy which gave rise to great problems for both the province and the Caliphs.

During the same period a group of Barbarians in Barqa,¹ with many supporters from Quraysh, revolted against their governor Muḥammad b. 'Abdawayh b. Jubila. As soon as the Caliph al-Wāthiq learned about the situation in Barqa, he ordered Rajā' al-Ḥaḍramī, one of his most efficient leaders, to take command of the Caliphal troops and march first to Damascus to crush the revolt in that city, and then move from there to suppress the other revolts in Bilād al-Shām and Barqa.² With the arrival of these troops in the region the balance of power changed in favour of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate and eventually Rajā' al-Ḥaḍramī succeeded, at least for a short time, in putting an end to the trouble. He perhaps managed to achieve the restoration of 'Abbāsid authority over the whole of Bilād al-Shām and Barqa.

In 240/863-64 there was another revolt in Ḥims directed against the Caliph and his governor in the city. The governor, Mūsā b. Ibrāhīm, under pressure from the citizens of the town, was forced to leave the area which then fell completely under the rebels command. When the Caliph al-Mutawakkil learned about the situation he sent 'Attāb b. 'Attāb and Muḥammad b. 'Abdawayh to put an end to this new trouble in the region. They succeeded in quelling the riot without using any force at all and Muḥammad was therefore appointed as ruler of the city instead of Mūsā who had been

1. Barqa according to Yaqut, Buldan, I, 573, was a large province which contained many towns and villages and it was located between Alexandria and Ifrīqiyya. Its largest city was Antābul.

2. Yaqubi, III, 169.

recently expelled from it.¹ The new governor Muḥammad b.

‘Abdawayh was not in a position to maintain peace and security in the area; therefore in 241/855 new trouble broke out, directed mainly against him personally. But the ruler proved his ability and sound tactics when he overcame this resistance and was thus in a position to rid himself of all the important leaders in the riot, by sending several of them to Samarra where they were put to death.²

During the period between the murder of the Caliph al-Mutawakkil and al-Musta‘īn's rise to power there is little mention of any new trouble in the region and it seems to have remained quiet. This was possibly due to the savage and inhuman policy of the ‘Abbāsid agents in Syria. It may be that there was no new adventurer in the area who could gather round him the considerable amount of manpower necessary to challenge the ‘Abbāsids' authority; so the inhabitants of Syria, despite the tyrannical policy of the ‘Abbāsid governors, remained apparently loyal to the Caliph of Samarra.

Al-Ya‘qūbī mentions that a revolt broke out in Jordan at the beginning of al-Musta‘īn's reign. The anti-‘Abbāsid

1. Yaqubi, III, 177; Tab., III, 1420-1. It is recorded that the Caliph gave instructions to ‘Attāb b. ‘Attāb not to enter into war with the citizens of the area but to ask them if they would accept the proposal of the Caliph which included the appointment of Muḥammad as their governor instead of Mūsā. And even if they refused he was not to initiate a battle with them.
2. Yaqubi, III, 177; cf. Tab., III, 1422-4, where he gives a detailed account of the event stating that even the Christians stood against this tyrannical ruler. The Caliph immediately sent forces from Damascus and other provinces to support the governor. After he had succeeded in crushing the revolt the Caliph rewarded him and his men with valuable gifts.

rioters succeeded in gaining control over the whole of the area and were able to put down several attempts by the governor of Palestine to restore the 'Abbāsid Caliphate's authority over the region. The citizens of Jordan, under the leadership of a man known as al-Qatāmī, were in control of the whole region and stopped sending their revenue to the Capital. This action was a potential danger to the Caliph whose position was already insecure. The Caliph was in great need of this revenue to maintain his position by offering it to his Turkish mercenaries, whose demands for greater salaries could not be ignored. The new leader in Jordan remained in power and enjoyed the support and encouragement of his subjects until the arrival of the Caliph's troops, who were mainly Turkish soldiers under the command of Muzāḥim b. Khāqān. The latter was in a position to win the battle against his opponent and restore 'Abbāsid authority over the district.¹ At the same time in 248/862 yet another riot broke out in Hims this time led by the citizens of the city themselves, in protest against the policy of the governor Kaydar b. 'Abd Allāh al-Ushrawsanī. The governor tried in vain to restore law and order and was forced to flee to another city, while several of his soldiers were put to death. The Caliph al-Musta'īn, in an attempt to restore the 'Abbāsids' authority over the insurgents, appointed 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Ḥabīb al-Azdī as governor of the city, but he died before arriving in the area. Therefore the Caliph appointed al-Faḍl

1. Yaqubi, III, 181.

b. Qārim, who was warmly welcomed by the citizens of the city. He in turn heard their complaints about the tyrannical actions of the previous ruler, Kaydar b. 'Abd Allāh. A short time later al-Faḍl heard that the people were intending to revolt against the 'Abbāsids' authority, and he succeeded in putting to death several of their leaders.¹ By so doing al-Faḍl probably thought that it would help him in one way or another to maintain his position and put an end to any possible attempt in the future to curtail the 'Abbāsids' power in this city. But his policy was seen to have disadvantages, when the citizens raised their voices in protest against his premature action. Al-Faḍl was not in a position to protect himself from the angry crowd, and was forced to retreat from his headquarters to a ruined palace nearby to defend himself. But even with his removal to this other palace, the governor was not able to stem the advance of the angry crowd, and one of his own soldiers succeeded in killing him.²

The citizens of Ḥimṣ, realizing the consequences of the murder of this ruler, feared a possible attack on their region from the governor of Damascus whose own position was threatened by this revolt.³ Therefore they decided to fight the governor of Damascus before he could prepare his troops and accordingly they marched towards the region under the command of Ghutayf b. Nī'ma al-Kalbī. Ghutayf b. Nī'ma and

1. Yaqubi, III, 181; Ibn 'Adīm, Zubdat al-Ḥalab min Ta'rīkh Ḥalab, I, 73.

2. Yaqubi, III, 181.

3. The governor was al-Nawsharī, b. Tājīl al-Turkī. Yaqubi, III, 182.

his forces failed to achieve their objectives and were forced to retreat to their own city again. Despite the continual trouble in Samarra and the weak position of the Caliph al-Musta'in, the latter sent an army under the leadership of Mūsā b. Bughā, aided by the loyal rulers of several cities in the region, to crush the trouble in the area. As the Caliph's troops approached the city, the citizens, especially those of the tribe of Banū Kalb, mobilized their forces under the command of a man known as Dābir al-A'fār. Then fighting broke out between the two sides and ended in a decisive defeat for the Hims army. As soon as Mūsā and his troops entered the city he gave his soldiers licence to loot and plunder it for three days. Moreover, instructions were given to set fire to several houses and for the property of the merchants to be confiscated.¹ Despite his victory, Mūsā failed to capture the leader of the revolt who had already fled and taken refuge with the bedouins.² The penalty which the citizens paid at the hands of Mūsā and his army was the harshest that they had ever suffered, and a speedy recovery was impossible. After its defeat the city of Hims³ remained quiet, and faithful to the 'Abbāsid Caliph, despite the resentment felt by its citizens to the tyrannical actions adopted against them by Mūsā b. Bughā. But al-Ya'qūbī, in a very brief statement, mentions that Ghutayf was in control of the city during the first year of al-Mu'tazz's reign, i.e.

1. Yaqubi, III, 182; Tab., III, 1533-4; Sibṭ, XII, 13b; Ibn Kathir, XI, 6.

2. Tab., III, 1534.

3. In his attempt to control the city, the Caliph al-Musta'in put Hims and Qinnasrīn, in 250/864, under the direct rule of the governor of Aleppo. EI², s.v. Hims.

252/866 and was put to death by Muḥammad b. al-Muwalid who had been sent by the Caliph to Palestine to quell the revolt there. The Banū Kalb, however, antagonised by the murder of their leader Ghutaṭayf, once more rose up against the general, who then fled back to Palestine.¹

Al-Ya'qūbī is the only historian who informs us about a revolt which broke out in 249/863 in Ma'arraḥ² under the command of Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm al-Tanūkhī who was supported by members of his own tribe the Tanūkh. He marched with his troops to Qinnasrīn³ and made it his headquarters until the arrival of Muḥammad b. al-Muwalid who successfully persuaded Yūsuf to come over to his side. But later on, Yūsuf took advantage of the troubled situation in Ḥimṣ, which had resulted in the escape of Ibn al-Muwalid to Palestine, and returned to Qinnasrīn himself.⁴ But al-Ya'qūbī, who presents this account, does not complete it and we have no information as to the consequences of Yūsuf's return. Moreover, the province seems to have remained quiet during the whole reign

1. Yaqubi, III, 181. Ibn al-'Adīm (Zubdat, I, 73) mentions that the citizens of Ḥimṣ refused to acknowledge al-Mu'tazz as Caliph and continued supporting al-Musta'īn. Aḥmed b. al-Muddabir, who was al-Mu'tazz's representative, advanced towards Aleppo and besieged it but he failed to achieve total success. Shortly after, the citizens paid their homage to the new Caliph and Ibn al-Muddabir became the governor of this city in addition to Qinnasrīn.
2. Ma'arraḥ or Ma'arrat al-Nu'mān, after al-Nu'mān b. Bashīr who died there, is a large city between Aleppo and Ḥamāt and during the period under consideration it was considered as one of the Ḥimṣ towns. Yaqut, Buldan, IV, 574-6.
3. Qinnasrīn was one of the ancient cities in Syria. It came under Muslim rule in 17/639. It is very near to 'Awāsim and Aleppo. Yaqut, Buldan, IV, 184-7.
4. Yaqubi, III, 182.

of the Caliph al-Mu'tazz and part of that of al-Muhtadī also.

During the short reign of al-Muhtadī, yet another uprising broke out in Hims under the leadership of Ibn 'Akkār who was able to take over the administration of the city after the governor Muḥammad b. Isrā'īl had escaped. Then Ibn 'Akkār followed hard on the governor's heels and several clashes took place between the two forces which eventually led to the murder of Ibn 'Akkār and the return of Ibn Isrā'īl to rule over the city.¹

Thus the inflammatory situation in Samarra had led to an unstable position in the region of Syria. Moreover, it encouraged several opportunists to match their power against that of the weak Caliphs and their deputies in the region. The adventurers were in a position to gather round them a considerable amount of support and to direct this against the agents of the Caliphs in a bid to retain their power. These circumstances even led certain of the Caliphs' ambitious governors to take advantage of the instability and gain independence for their region from the capital, or in other words, from the 'Abbāsids' control. This can be seen in the revolt of 'Īsā b. al-Shaykh al-Shaybānī, the governor of the provinces of Palestine and Jordan.² According to al-Ya'qūbī the governor of Damascus, Nawsharī b. Tājīl al-Turkī, marched in 252/866 against 'Īsā b. al-Shaykh, the governor of Palestine, who showed discontent with the Turkish supremacy.

1. Yaqubi, III, 188.

2. Ibn Sa'īd, al-Mughrib, I, 80-1; Balawī, pp. 50-1; Ibar, III, 301.

Therefore, a fierce battle took place between the two armies in Jordan which ended with the defeat of 'Īsā and the dispersal of his troops. 'Īsā then fled to Palestine and from there he went to Egypt. His defeat offered Nawsharī the chance to bring Palestine under his control. Al-Ya'qūbī's account of this event is ambiguous and misleading but 'Īsā probably regained the governorship of Palestine after the expulsion of Nawsharī by Muḥammad b. al-Muwalid who had been sent to the region by the Caliph al-Mu'tazz.¹ Other sources do not mention the battle but rather indicate that 'Īsā b. al-Shaykh had brought Damascus and its region under his control, and stopped the revenue of the region from being sent to Samarra.² It seems that he continued exerting his control over Damascus in addition to applying himself to the equally important political manoeuvres directed against the 'Abbāsids. Thus he was able to confiscate the revenue that had been sent from Egypt to the Caliph of Samarra and which was estimated at seven hundred and fifty thousand dinar.³ The Caliph al-Muhtadī, despite his need for this money, was not in a position to send troops from the capital to crush the revolt; therefore he asked the governor of Egypt, Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn, to raise an army against the rebel and to restore peace and security to the province. Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn, who

1. Yaqubi, III, 184; see also Ibn Shaddād, al-A'lāq al-Khatīra, Damascus, 1382/1962, II, 124.

2. Kamil, VII, 119; Ibn Shaddād, II, 124.

3. Ibn Sa'īd, Sīrat Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn, p. 11; Ibn Sa'īd, al-Mughrib, I, 80; Kindi, p. 184; cf. Yaqubi, III, 185, where he states that 'Īsā escaped to Palestine from the Turks who decided to murder him in revenge for the death

was eager to extend his authority and to gain the Caliph's approval, appreciated this suggestion and immediately led his troops to suppress the uprising.¹

It is noteworthy that, apart from the latter revolt in Syria, all the rebellions were led and encouraged by the citizens of the province. This may have been linked with the transference of power in Samarra from Arab hands to the army of foreign slaves. For this reason we find that tribal elements constituted the main body of support for the rebels, who seem to have had no political aim other than the retention of power, or of making known their discontentment, and their objections to the policy of the 'Abbāsid rule. In addition to the Turkish supremacy, which had possibly led to this resentment in the first place, the struggle for power in the capital had encouraged many adventurers to appear on the political scene and to enjoy, at least for a short time, their authority over one or two provinces. Thus the conflict among the members of the 'Abbāsid family and their conflict with the Turkish officers were the main factors leading to the unstable situation in Syria and the other provinces. The Caliphs, however, tried to crush these revolts at any price, in an effort to maintain peace and

Contd.] of Ibn Nawsharī who had been killed in the last battle. In Palestine 'Īsā gained enough confidence to lay hands on the revenue from Egypt which was sent to Samarra and prevented the Caliph from receiving the Capital which was of great importance to him.

1. Ibn Sa'īd, pp. 11-2; Balawī, pp. 50-1; Kindi, pp. 214-5; cf. Yaqubi, III, 184.

order in the region, besides retaining their authority. But even with the adoption of a hard line towards the populace, neither the Caliphs nor their agents were able to eliminate them entirely; on the contrary their severe measures and punishments proved useless against these determined rebels. The main factor which helped the 'Abbāsids maintain their authority over the province was the lack of co-operation between the leaders of the various revolts which broke out in different places and at different times. Although the natives of the area were not in a position to gain their independence from the Caliphate, immediately after this period Syria separated herself from the rest of the Empire and was governed directly by the Turkish ruler of Egypt, Khumārawayh b. Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn in 271/884.

2. Egypt

It is evident that there were several outbreaks of unrest in Egypt, initiated by the Arab elements in the region; these revolts were overpowered by the Caliphs, who retained their authority over the province. Those who participated in the uprisings were faced with severe punishment from the 'Abbāsids themselves.¹

Since the time of al-Ma'mūn Egypt had been given as appanage to one of the powerful leaders at the court who in turn sent his own deputy to direct the affairs of the province on his behalf.² But at the time of al-Mutawakkil, Egypt, with the other western provinces, was designated by the Caliph to his son, al-Muntasir, who, like the Turkish leaders, sent his deputy there as his representative.³

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1. Yaqubi, III, 169; Kindi, p. 188; Nujum, II, 207-8; S. Lane Poole describes al-Mu'tasim's treatment of these people saying, "When al-Mu'tasim, brother of the Caliph and afterwards Caliph himself, came to the rescue with 4,000 Turkish troops, he found the city blockaded by the Arabs; he dispersed them (879) and killed their chiefs. Five months later, he returned to Baghdad, 'driving a crowd of wretched barefoot prisoners before his savage troopers; and the insurrection broke out afresh and spread among the Copts; and at last the Caliph resolved to go to Egypt in person." A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages, VI, London, 1901, 37.
 2. B. Lewis, "Egypt and Syria", CHI, I, 176-7, states that al-Ma'mūn inaugurated a new system by giving the province of Egypt as an appanage to his Khurāsānī general, 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir.
 3. Yaqubi, III, 174; Tab., III, 1395; Kindi, pp. 198, 199, 200, 202.

It appears that there was an anti-‘Abbāsid movement in this province led by the ‘Alids, because in 235/850, al-Kindī records that Ishāq b. Yahyā, who was the wālī (governor) of Egypt, received a message from both the Caliph and his son al-Muntaṣir, ordering him to deport the Ṭālibiyyīn from the region to Iraq. The Ṭālibiyyīn were, therefore, forced to leave the area and on their arrival in Iraq were obliged to move to Medina instead.¹ The last Arab governor of Egypt, ‘Anbasa b. Ishāq al-Dabbī, 238-42/853-57, was among the best of the rulers of that region, as he kept a tight hold over his officials and showed his subjects more good will than they had ever known before.² After four years of wise government and valiant service ‘Anbasa was recalled and a series of Turkish rulers proceeded to misrule the province.³ It has been suggested that this change from Arab to Turkish rule was part of a revolution which was felt in most parts of the Caliphate and which led to the extinction of the temporal authority of the Commander of the Faithful.⁴

Because of the tyrannical policy of the governor Yazīd b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Tūrki, Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Abī Ṭālib, known as "Ḥadri", gathered round him a considerable number of supporters to try to regain Egypt from this savage ruler. His attempt failed, partly due to the lack of co-operation amongst his body of support and partly because the ruler became aware of the coup and captured most of its

1. Kindi, p. 198; Khitat, I, 312.

2. Kindi, pp. 200-202; cf. S. Lane Poole, VI, 40.

3. Kindi, pp. 202-3.

4. Cf. S. Lane Poole, VI, 59.

sympathisers. Then in 248/862, Yazīd b. 'Abd Allāh was able to place Muḥammad and his followers under arrest. They received very inhuman treatment and eventually Muḥammad with a few of his people were expelled to Iraq.¹

Because of the unrest of the 'Alids and their sympathisers in the province during the pre-al-Muntaṣir Caliphate, the latter, shortly after his ascent to the throne, took very harsh measures against the 'Alids in Egypt. Al-Kindī presents a list of these new regulations which included the following points:

- a) No 'Alid could be given a domain, day'a, or be allowed to ride a horse, or travel from Fuṣṭāṭ to other cities and towns in Egypt.
- b) No 'Alids were allowed to possess more than one slave each.
- c) If there was any conflict between a Ṭālibī and a non-Ṭālibī, judges at the court must hear the non-Ṭālibī claim and accept it against his enemy the Ṭālibī.²

From this passage the kind of policy the 'Abbāsids had followed in Egypt is quite evident, as is the position of the Arabs as a whole under these inhuman measures adopted by the Caliphs' governors. It seems very likely that the tyrannical policy of the governors was one of the main reasons behind the several revolts which took place in Egypt, others being the weak position of the Caliphate, and the emergence of a few adventurers who were ready to show their resentment openly.

1. Kindi, pp. 203-204.

2. Kindi, p. 204.

The Caliphs, however, encouraged their deputies to practise the policy which they thought would serve them best; therefore, the former used force as the only means to maintain their authority and to collect the revenues of the province. But even with these restrictive measures the 'Abbāsids and their deputies were not able to maintain law and order in Egypt. Thus, several revolts broke out in the area, directed mainly against the 'Abbāsids and their fellow-supporters, the Turkish mercenaries. These revolts, as we shall see below, had adversely affected the position of the 'Abbāsids and led eventually to the separation of Egypt from the 'Abbāsid Empire.

As a reaction against the Turkish policy of placing al-Musta'īn on the throne instead of al-Mu'tazz, Ṣafwān al-ʿUqaylī revolted in Egypt, refusing to acknowledge the Caliphate of al-Musta'īn, declaring that the rightful Caliph was al-Mu'tazz. Although Ṣafwān was enthusiastically encouraged by the natives in his rightful protest, he retracted his objections when he learned that almost all the dignitaries in Egypt had accepted without any prejudice the legitimacy of al-Musta'īn's Caliphate. Apparently Ṣafwān used this incident as a means to exert his influence against the 'Abbāsid dynasty in general and against the Turkish leaders in particular. A considerable amount of support came as a result of the reaction to the governor's policy, and the citizens probably thought that under the leadership of Ṣafwān they would be able to put an end to the tyrannical policy of the Caliph's deputies. Ṣafwān seems to have remained in power until the Caliphate of al-Mu'tazz, who shortly after, ascended the throne and learned

through his secret agent in Egypt, 'āmil al-barīd, that Ṣafwān, completely insincere in his attitude towards the 'Abbāsīd family, was intending to separate Egypt from the empire and establish an independent state. Acting in accordance with this information the Caliph, al-Mu'tazz, ordered Sīmā al-Sharābī, one of his Turkish officers, to lead an army against Ṣafwān and to put an end to the trouble in all the provinces of Egypt. Al-Ya'qūbī, who informs us of this revolt, does not continue his account of it but instead states that the army which had been despatched by al-Mu'tazz did not go straight to the area; it stopped on the way to deal with another revolt in the region.¹ Since the sources remain silent, our knowledge concerning this uprising is only partial and we have no clear information about its consequences. We can only speculate from the subsequent events that the army was able to put down the revolt and to restore the 'Abbāsīds' authority for a while.

In Rabī' I 252/February 866, another movement began in Egypt, in the vicinity of Alexandria, led by Jābir b. al-Walīd al-Mudā'lijī who was successful in invading and controlling /- all the villages, towns and cities around Alexandria. The governor of the city took immediate steps to combat this uprising and sent his troops to fight the rebels. However, they were not powerful enough to face such strong resistance and therefore failed to gain a victory, despite the regular reinforcements sent by the governor. The rebel was still encouraged by the situation, and extended his authority to

1. Yaqubi, III, 184-85.

include the nearby settlements.¹ His continual victories had strengthened his position, enabling him to challenge the governor even at his headquarters. Therefore, he and his troops marched on Alexandria and besieged the city for a while. Despite the oppression which the citizens faced during the period of the siege they refused to submit to the rebel's authority and eventually he failed in his attempt to conquer the city.²

Al-Kindī speaks of another revolt which broke out in the area at this time and which made the situation even more dangerous for the Caliph of Samarra. This uprising was led by an 'Alid pretender, 'Abd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. 'Alī b. Abi Tālib known as Ibn al-Arqaṭ, whose first appearance on the political scene was with the previous adventurer, Jābir al-Mudlijī; but after the latter's unsuccessful attempts to invade Alexandria, Ibn al-Arqaṭ took over the rebel leadership. As soon as the Caliph al-Mu'tazz learned about this revolt, he despatched his troops from Samarra to crush it, in an attempt to restore peace and security to the province. Ghulbak al-Turkī, who led the Caliph's forces, was able to win a victory over the rebel and kill several of his supporters. Ibn al-Arqaṭ, after his defeat at the hands of the Caliph's troops, joined forces against the 'Abbāsids³ with yet another rebel in the

1. Sāwarūs b. al-Muqqafa', Ta'rīkh al-Baṭāriqa al-Miṣriyya, II, Cairo, 1943, 39; Kindi, pp. 205-206.

2. Sāwarūs b. al-Muqqafa' II, 39-40.

3. Abū Ḥarmalut was the leader with whom Ibn al-Arqaṭ joined forces against the 'Abbāsids. Kindi, pp. 206-207.

area. When the Caliph al-Mu'tazz learned about the deterioration of the situation in Egypt, he sent troops from Samarra under the leadership of Muzāḥim b. Khāqān to enforce the commands of the ruler in the province and to co-operate together with him in restoring order to the area. In Ramaḍān 252/August 866 Muzāḥim's forces succeeded in putting down the revolt of Ibn al-Arqaṭ and the latter, after his defeat, asked Muzāḥim for a guarantee of safety on his life which he was given.¹

In Rabī' I 253/February-March 867, another revolt broke out in the Ḥawf² which obliged Muzāḥim b. Khāqān to leave his palace and travel hastily to the area. Muzāḥim mobilised his forces and succeeded in winning the battle against the rebels despite his unfamiliarity with the nature of the battlefield. He even captured the leader of the revolt who was then taken back with Muzāḥim to his headquarters.³ Meanwhile, Muzāḥim was honoured by the Caliph for his successful military manoeuvres and appointed governor of the province instead of Yazīd b. 'Abd Allāh al-Turkī. Muzāḥim, after regaining control of southern and central Egypt, turned his attention towards Jābir who was still enjoying his superiority over the northern part of Egypt. Therefore, Muzāḥim commanded Yazīd to lead his troops against the rebel, and shortly after their despatch, Muzāḥim himself joined

1. Kindi, p. 208.

2. Ḥawf: two districts in Egypt; al-Ḥawf al-sharqī lies towards Bilād al-Shām and al-Ḥawf al-gharbī, near Dimatta. But these two districts were joined to each other. Yaqut, Buldan, II, 365.

3. Kindi, p. 209; Nujum, II, 337.

them and together they were able to crush the revolt. Then Jābir appealed for mercy for his life, and, on being assured of his safety, he surrendered to Muzāḥim who immediately sent him to Samarra in Rajab 254/July 868.¹ Muzāḥim proved to be an efficient military leader as well as an able administrator, in quelling the trouble and in restoring peace to the region after a certain period of struggle for power among the local adventurers themselves and between them and the 'Abbāsids' agents.

In 254/868, the Caliph al-Mu'tazz had given Egypt as appanage to the Turkish general Bāykabāk, who in turn had appointed Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn d. 270/884, as his deputy in the area.² The arrival of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn in Egypt initiated a new phase in the history of this province because he realised the weakness of the Caliph's position in Samarra and had every intention of making Egypt an independent state under his own control, an aim which he eventually achieved.³ Shortly after Aḥmad's arrival in Egypt a revolt - whose leader, Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ibrāhīm b. Ṭabāṭiba, was of 'Alid descent - broke out in the northern area but it did not last long and Muḥammad was put to death.⁴ Ibn al-Athīr states that this leader proclaimed his right to the Caliphate in opposition to the weak and unsuitable 'Abbāsids.⁵

1. Kindi, pp. 209-210; Nujum, II, 337.

2. Tab., III, 1897; Balawī, p. 33; Nujum, III, 5-6; cf. Kindi, p. 212 where he states that the Caliph al-Mu'tazz himself appointed Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn for this office.

3. B. Lewis, 'Egypt and Syria', CHI, I, 178.

4. Kindi, p. 212; Kamil, VII, 148; Nujum, III, 6.

5. Kamil, VII, 148.

It is noteworthy that this is the first rebel in Egypt who actually claimed a right to the Caliphate and clearly made it his political goal. The previous adventurers had always been uncertain about their objectives apart from their desire to hold power.

Another 'Alid, Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. 'Umar b. 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, known as Ibn al-Ṣūfī al-'Alawī, rose against the 'Abbāsids in 253/867 in upper Egypt but his revolt seems at first to have been ignored by them. Ibrāhīm provoked the anger of Ibn Ṭūlūn when in 255/869 he invaded and plundered the city of Isnā¹ putting a fair number of its inhabitants to death. Therefore Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn ordered his forces to move into the area. Ibn Ṭūlūn's troops failed to crush the revolt because of the entrenched position of the rebel and his knowledge of the nature of the battlefield. But this failure did not prevent Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn from sending to the area new forces who, with their sophisticated weapons, were in a position to defeat the rebel and disrupt his forces and on 3 Rabī' II, 256/14 March 870 he was forced to flee from the dangerous threat posed by them.²

Ibn Ṭūlūn, who succeeded in bringing to an end the explosive situation in Egypt, was encouraged to exert his own authority and to enjoy a form of autonomy in the province.

1. Isnā: the city was located at the end of upper Egypt, and the only big city beyond it was Aswān. It was very famous for its agricultural and commercial life. Yaqut, Buldan, I, 265-266.

2. Kindi, p. 213; Nujum, III, 6-7.

The murder of Bāykabāk at the request of the Caliph al-Muhtadī meant a great victory for Ibn Ṭūlūn because Egypt was then offered to Yārjūkh, another Turkish general, who was in very close contact with Ibn Ṭūlūn. Yārjūkh immediately approved Aḥmad's position as he had extended his authority to include Alexandria and Barqa.¹ Shortly after, Aḥmad was able to bring Syria under his own power when the Caliph invited him to crush the revolt of 'Īsā b. al-Shaykh.² Eventually Ibn Ṭūlūn with his apparent obedience to the Caliph of Samarra took advantage of the opportunity to establish a semi-independent state including the territories of Egypt and Syria and which later came to be known by his name, the Ṭūlūnids.

Despite the long struggle for power of the western provinces against the 'Abbāsids, they finally succeeded in obtaining their autonomy and remained on good terms with the central government by sending the annual revenue. It is noteworthy that the Caliph tried hard to suppress any attempt to separate these provinces from the central government, especially when the uprisings took place under an Arab leader. This can be seen in both Egypt and Syria as well as in other provinces. The Ṭūlūnid dynasty was the earliest manifestation of a political crystallisation in the unruly and heretofore inarticulate Turkish element in the heart of the Caliphate. Other and more important Turkish dynasties were soon to follow. The case of Aḥmad b. Ṭūlūn was typical of the founders of the many states during the decline of the Caliphate.³

1. Kamil, VII, 126; Ibar, III, 195; Balawī, pp. 45-46.

2. Nujum, III, 7.

3. P.K. Hitti, p. 455.

3. Al-Hijāz.

Even al-Hijāz, which had remained almost entirely aloof from the internal struggles of the 'Abbāsid state, was now provoked to action, probably by the increasing influence of the Turkish mercenaries. The tense political situation facing the area in 230/845, especially in Medina, was caused by the continual raids by the tribe of Banū Salīm.¹ Al-Ya'qūbī clearly states that they paid homage to their leader 'Azīza al-Khafājī and designated him as Caliph.² Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ b. al-'Abbās al-Hāshimī, the governor of Medina, took firm steps against the rebels by immediately ordering Ḥammād b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, who had been sent by the Caliph al-Wāthiq, to reinforce the troops of Medina. He prepared them to face all possible attacks by the A'rāb and to move right to the heart of the trouble and bring it to an end. Ḥammād was killed in a battle, after which his men dispersed.³ This victory over the imperial forces encouraged the rebels to continue their barbarous deeds which strengthened their position in the region, and increasingly limited the authority of the 'Abbāsid governors. It is clear that the Caliph sent his troops as quickly as possible to crush the trouble in the area, mainly because of the importance of Hijāz from a religious point of view. Moreover, this uprising seems to have seriously threatened the 'Abbāsids'

1. Tab., III, 1336; Kamil, VII, 8; Ibar, III, 271; cf. Yaqubi, III, 169.

2. Yaqubi, III, 169; cf. Tab., III, 1336, where he gives the name 'Uzayza b. Quṭṭāb al-Sulamī. Moreover, he does not mention that they nominated him as Caliph.

3. Yaqubi, III, 169-70; Miskawayh, VI, 533.

authority, since its followers had already recognised their leader as the legitimate Caliph. The defeat of the Caliph's troops encouraged the rebels to extend their raids to the scattered villages on the route between Mecca and Medina, even going so far as to cut the lines of communication between the two cities. These activities on the part of the tribesmen once again provoked the anger of the Caliph who, immediately after hearing of the defeat of Ḥammād's army, ordered one of his Turkish officers, Bughā al-Kabīr, to go to the area and suppress the revolt. The Caliph's army, after heavy fighting with the rebels, eventually succeeded in crushing them and Bughā al-Kabīr inflicted severe punishments on the captives,¹ the worst that they had ever experienced. This could be interpreted as Turkish retaliation against the A'rāb elements, whose revolt had been directed mainly against the increasing influence of the Turkish mercenaries at the court.

The punishments inflicted on the tribesmen proved futile, as, shortly after this revolt, yet another broke out in 231/846 in the vicinity of Fadak² led by the tribes of Banū Fizāra and Banū Murra.³ Meanwhile, the captives whom Bughā al-Kabīr had put in prison, took advantage of this

1. Yaqubi, III, 169-70; Tab., III, 1336-8; Miskawayh, VI, 534-35.

2. Fadak was an ancient, small town in the northern part of Hijāz near Khaybar and, according to Yāqūt, two or three days journey from Medina. Fadak owes its fame in the history of Islam to the fact that it was the object of disagreement and a particular decision by the prophet and that it gave rise to a dispute between Fāṭima and Abū Bakr. EI², s.v. Fadak.

3. Tab., III, 1342.

revolt and planned to escape; but they failed and met with severe penalties which cost most of them their lives.¹ As soon as the tribesmen in Fadak heard about Bughā's advance towards their area, they became very alarmed and moved away from the district in various directions in order to try and avoid a direct confrontation with the imperial troops. Bughā, however, camped in the area nearby and succeeded in capturing a few of the rebels, taking them back to Medina.²

Another revolt broke out in 232/847 in al-Yamāma³ led by the tribe of Banū Numayr, who succeeded in taking over the administration of the province and in bringing the whole area under their direct control. The Caliph al-Wāthiq himself ordered Bughā al-Kabīr to march on the area and crush the rebellion. Although Bughā initially was not able to win the battle, later on, with the arrival of reinforcements, he defeated Banū Numayr who suffered heavy casualties.⁴ It was recorded that the main reason for the trouble throughout the area of Ḥijāz was the increasing power of the army of the Turkish slaves whom the A'rab would no doubt have considered as usurpers of their own power.⁵ However, the lack of any

1. Tab., III, 1338-40; Kamil, VIII, 12-13.

2. Tab., III, 1342.

3. Al-Yamāma was a district in central Arabia which was originally called Jaww "The bottom of the valley". Al-Yamāma lies on the long ridge of the 'Arid, to which belongs its chief wādī 'Ird, which runs through the district. EI¹, s.v. Al-Yamāma.

4. Tab., III, 1358-63; Kamil, VII, 18-17.

5. Tab., III, 1359, states that Banū Numayr told the messenger of Bughā, Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Ja'farī, "You were born among us but after you grew up you did not respect the prohibitions (then you were expelled). And now you have gone further, to the extent of bringing these slaves and 'ulūj to fight us."

powerful government capable of forcing its subjects, especially the A'rāb, to respect law and order probably offered more opportunities for these people to increase their raids.

In 251/865 Banū 'Uqayl in Mecca provoked more trouble in the area by severing communications between Mecca and Judda. They thus challenged the 'Abbāsid troops stationed in the province. The governor of Mecca launched his assault against the rebels and inflicted heavy losses on them. It must be remembered that other A'rāb in the area took advantage of this situation and made raids on the various villages in the vicinity.¹ Consequently this trouble led to an increase in prices due to the lack of a capable ruler who could maintain peace and security in the region.

Shortly after this trouble, a new revolt broke out at the instigation of a new adventurer Ismā'īl b. Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Abī Tālib who was believed to be of 'Alid descent.² As soon as the governor of Mecca heard about this new uprising he moved out of the city, leaving it at the mercy of the rebels, who

1. Tab., III, 1644; Kamil, VII, 111. The ruler, Ja'far, killed about three hundred persons in his attack against Banū 'Uqayl.

2. Tab., III, 1644; cf. Maqatil, p. 669. Although Isfahānī mentions this revolt in very vague terms, comparing it with that of the other 'Alids, he clearly states that he did not wish to discuss him and his revolt in detail because Ismā'īl did not intend to restore the 'Alids supremacy.

plundered the house of the governor himself in addition to several other houses which belonged to the officers of the Caliph. Moreover, Ismā'īl b. Yūsuf confiscated the money which had been sent to reconstruct the Ka'ba in addition to the gold and silver contained in it and set fire to certain parts of Mecca.¹ Despite his entrance to Mecca he was not sure of the loyalty of the natives of the city; therefore for the sake of the peace and security of his followers, as well as his own position, he left Mecca and headed for Medina. This move could be interpreted as an attempt by Ismā'īl to extend his authority to Medina since he did not face any opposition from the 'Abbāsīd agents in that area. When the governor of Medina learned about this threat to his power, he too fled from his headquarters.² Our sources do not mention whether or not the rebel entered Medina, and if he entered it, what policy he adopted. Neither do they present the attitude of the inhabitants of the city towards him. It may be that the citizens of Medina showed no sympathy for him and were displeased at his venture; and for this reason Ismā'īl did not settle there with them, but returned instead to Mecca. This time he was prevented from even entering Mecca, due to the strong opposition of the inhabitants who objected to his policy, therefore he besieged

1. Tab., III, 1644; Kamil, VII, 111; cf. Yaqubi, III, 183, where he considers the place of the uprising to be Medina instead of Mecca. Al-Ya'qūbī even believes that the main reason behind this revolt was the personal conflict between the governor of Medina and Ismā'īl b. Yūsuf.

2. Tab., III, 1644.

the city for a time. Despite the difficulties which the citizens faced during this siege, they refused to surrender to the rebel's authority and when Ismā'īl found that there was no advantage to be gained from continuing with the siege, he removed his forces to Jadda where, on his arrival, he confiscated all the property and goods which had arrived there from various parts of the world.¹ Thus he gradually became more dangerous to the 'Abbāsids, until he was almost the only man with any authority in the whole region of Hijaz despite his unpopularity among the citizens. The region itself was of great importance not only for the Caliph but also for all Muslims, if they were to be sure of their safety in the area during the pilgrimage. Ismā'īl, whose power was still increasing because of the lack of any strong opposition, continued his barbarous schemes of plundering and confiscating property. He may have taken advantage of the deteriorating situation in Samarra caused by the civil war between al-Mu'tazz and al-Musta'in, which prevented both of them from sending troops to crush the trouble in Hijāz. On the other hand, Ismā'īl was unable to win the favour of the majority of the inhabitants despite his honourable genealogical line. His failure may be attributed to his savage and brutal actions against the natives.

Eventually the Caliph al-Mu'tazz sent his troops to the area in order to put an end to the rebel's activities and to restore peace and security to the region so that the

1. Tab., III, 1645-46; Ibn al-'Amīd, fol. 990.

inhabitants would be able to live their daily lives and the pilgrims would have safe conduct. However, the Caliph's troops failed to suppress the revolt and did not even succeed in securing the pilgrimages in that year, 251/865, and therefore thousands of people failed to complete the rituals of their religion and thousands of others died. It is surprising that even with his final victory over the imperial troops Ismā'īl neither won more supporters, nor remained in Mecca itself, but instead left for Jadda.¹ It is noteworthy that this war lord, in spite of his successful military manoeuvres, did not enter such cities as Mecca, Medina and Jadda but always camped on the outskirts. After his departure from Mecca, Ismā'īl did not launch any more significant campaigns against the 'Abbāsids, and in 252/866 he died.²

Al-Mas'ūdī states that after the death of Ismā'īl, his brother Muḥammad succeeded to the leadership of the A'rāb revolts against the 'Abbāsids. Muḥammad met with the Caliph's troops under the command of Abū al-Sāj in a decisive battle, the Caliph's troops eventually defeating the rebel, and forcing him to flee from his headquarters.³ Muḥammad moved from Jadda to Yamāma and then to Baḥrayn and was able to bring the tribal elements in these provinces over to his side. Al-Mas'ūdī, who was the only historian to present this account, neither completes it nor gives us enough

1. Tab., III, 1645.

2. Tab., III, 1686; Muruḥ, VII, 395.

3. Muruḥ, VII, 395.

information about the consequences of the new campaigns launched by Muḥammad against the Caliph. But the appearance of Muḥammad may have intensified the situation more than ever before, because al-Mas'ūdī also mentions that quite a few of the 'Alids had left Ḥijāz for Egypt, because of fear of a possible civil war in the area, in addition to the prevailing high level of prices¹ caused by the continual uprisings in the region.²

We can conclude from the above brief presentation of the situation in Ḥijāz, that the trouble which had been provoked in the area was led mainly by the tribal elements who found it difficult to accept the supremacy of the Turkish mercenaries. It is worth noting that the urban section of the population did not associate themselves with the rebels, but continued steadfast in their traditional respect for the House of 'Abbās, despite the latter's delicate position. Even with the emergence of an 'Alid leader, the city dwellers remained faithful to the 'Abbāsīd dynasty. Despite the immediate reactions from the Caliphs to the uprisings in Ḥijāz and the heavy measures which were inflicted upon the rebels, the 'Abbāsīds failed to maintain peace and order in the area.

1. Muruḥ, VII, 403.

2. Al-Mas'ūdī, too, alludes briefly to another revolt which had broken out in Medīna by this time and which was led by an 'Alid descendent known as Ibn Mūsā b. 'Abd. Allāh b. Mūsā b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Abī Tālib. Muruḥ, VII, 403. But there is no mention in our sources of such a revolt. Moreover, al-Mas'ūdī does not refer to the outcome of this revolt nor to the people who took part in it.

It was the inflammatory situation in the Capital, Samarra, which encouraged the tribal elements in Hijāz and elsewhere to extend their raids.

D. The Eastern Provinces

1. Ṭabaristān¹

The Caliph al-Musta'īn rewarded Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir, who had crushed the revolt of Yahyā b. 'Alī in Kūfa, with appanages in Ṭabaristān from the Ṣawāfī al-Sultāniyya, "the lands of the Caliphs themselves," which adjoined the public grazing land. Sulaymān b. 'Abd Allāh was the deputy of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir in this province but the real authority lay in the hands of another deputy, Muḥammad b. Aws who was assisted by his two sons, who were governors of several cities in Ṭabaristān.² These latter were still young and incompetent, and as a result of their tyrannical behaviour the inhabitants of the region suffered gross ill-treatment. The citizens of Ṭabaristān were on good terms with their neighbours in Daylam, who returned this respect and friendship. They completely rejected Muḥammad b. Aws, and their hatred of him was further increased by his successful raid on Daylam in 250/864-65, which

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1. Ṭabaristān was the region of high mountains, for the most part occupied by what is at the present day known as the Alburz chain lying along the south coast of the Caspian sea, being to the east and to the north of Qūmis. Yaqut, Buldan, III, 501-507; Le Strange, pp. 368-76.
 2. Tab., III, 1524; Miskawayh, VI, 571; cf. Ibn Isfandiyyar, pp. 157-8, who mentions only one son of Ibn Aws, the governor of Kalār. His father's tyranny and harshness were such that all who were able, sold or abandoned their houses and migrated elsewhere. Every year taxes were levied three times, once for Muḥammad b. Aws, once for his son and once for the Magian who acted as their agent.

they feared would damage their good relations with the Daylams. This anger and hatred of the governor was aggravated by his own foolish actions and by the behaviour of Jābir b. Hārūn who had been sent here by Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir to collect the revenues from his property.¹ Jābir did not confine his tax-gathering to his master's property, but extended it to the public land, also. Such conduct led the inhabitants of the region to plan possible ways of wholly freeing themselves from 'Abbāsīd domination, and this period, when the Caliphate was struggling for its survival and would be unable to back up the troops of the local governors, seemed the opportune moment.² Political and economic factors were the main reasons for dissatisfaction in the region and it appears to have had little to do with any ideological aspects, a later interpretation of Shī'ite origin.³

The inhabitants of the region grouped themselves under the leadership of two local notables in protest against the rapacity of the tax collector,⁴ and they were urged to stand

1. Tab., III, 1524; Miskawayh, VI, 571.

2. Cf. W. Barthold, p. 214. E.G. Browne, I, 349, considers this revolt as the struggle of the Persians to establish their own traditional way of life and an attempt to give fresh expression to their marked preference for Shī'ite doctrine.

3. Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 162; W. Barthold, p. 214.

4. They were Muḥammad and Ja'far the sons of Rustam. Tab., III, 1526. According to Barthold, p. 214, they were Shī'a, but al-Ṭabarī does not mention their religious complexion, merely stating that they were very respectable people. Ibn Isfandiyar, who gives a very ambiguous account of the beginning of this revolt, does not mention the sons of Rustam. Ibn Isfandiyar, pp. 162 ff.

firm against such tyranny. As soon as Jābir learned about the reaction which his policy had provoked he fled, to join Sulaymān b. 'Abd Allāh in the hope of finding safety and security. Then the two leaders of the opposing forces began to realise the possible consequences of Jābir's flight and became particularly afraid of Sulaymān's reaction to it. Therefore they sent a delegation to their neighbours in Daylam, asking them to join in their revolt against the tyrannical policy of the rulers of that region. The Daylamīs, who had recently suffered at the hand of Muḥammad b. Aws' raid, appreciated their neighbours' suggestion and promised to co-operate with them in repelling any future attack from their common enemy.¹

It was felt that the insurrection should have a person of greater prestige at its head, so an approach was made to one of the local Tālibiyyīn, Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm, proposing that he should lead the citizens in their struggle for justice. Muḥammad declined, but at the same time advised them to approach another 'Alid descendent, al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, who, according to Muḥammad, was more fitted for such leadership than himself.² Accordingly a message in the name of Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm was sent to al-Ḥasan b. Zayd in Rayy.³

1. Tab., III, 1526-27; Miskawayh, VI, 571-72.

2. Tab., III, 1527.

3. Tab., III, 1527-28; cf. Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 163, who states that the inhabitants of the region sent deputations to the Sayyid Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm b. 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan b. Zayd b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, who was in Rūyan, and begged him to receive their oath of allegiance so that, perchance, by his blessing, God might free them from the tyranny under which they lived.

The messenger succeeded in persuading al-Ḥasan to accept the proposition of the people of Ṭabaristān and be their leader in the struggle against the policy of the 'Abbāsīd dynasty and free them from their tyrannical rulers. As soon as al-Ḥasan arrived in the province all the inhabitants of the area, including the Daylamīs, accepted him as their sole leader in the fight against Sulaymān b. Ṭāhir.¹

Although our sources present this revolt as being mainly of Shī'a ideology and origin, the main reason for it, as is suggested in the above discussion, was the tyrannical policy of the Caliphs' agents and their deputies in the province. It was a purely economic and political revolt aimed at re-establishing justice and peace in the region. Again it relied on the 'Alids' leadership to strengthen it with more popularity. The arrival of al-Ḥasan b. Zayd encouraged those who felt oppressed to resist the policy of the governors, and they even succeeded in expelling the agents of Muḥammad b. Aws from several places, forcing them to take refuge with Sulaymān b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir. When the people in the area surrounding Ṭabaristān heard about the success of al-Ḥasan b. Zayd they immediately submitted to his authority, acknowledging his leadership.² His power, therefore, became a potential danger, not only to the Ṭāhirids whose position in the region seems to have been on the decline due to the behaviour of their agents, but also

1. Tab., III, 1527-29; Ibar, III, 281; Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 163.

2. Tab., III, 1526-29; Miskawayh, VI, 572; Muntazam, XII, 13a-b; cf. Ibn Isfandiyar, pp. 172-73.

to the Caliph, to whose numerous problems in the Capital was added the difficulty of maintaining control over the various regions with their continuous revolts. This led the Caliph of Samarra and his ruler in Khurāsān, to send forces to combat and suppress this revolt.

Al-Ḥasan b. Zayd took advantage of these circumstances and started his military campaigns by advancing towards Amul where he defeated the forces of Muḥammad b. Aws and seized the city (23 Shawwāl 250/29 November 864). Muḥammad b. Aws was very fortunate to escape with his life, and he took refuge with Sulaymān b. 'Abd Allāh who was stationed not far from Amul.¹ This victory of al-Ḥasan over the 'Abbāsid forces in the region encouraged many different types of people to join the revolt. Among those who associated themselves with him were the ṣa'ālīk (vagabonds) and the ḥawziyya² in that region.³ Al-Ḥasan's army was now in a position to launch attacks on the nearby places and bring them under his control.⁴

Al-Ḥasan stayed a few days in Amul to collect the revenues from the region for himself instead of for the Caliph of Samarra,⁵ implying that he now considered himself

1. Tab., III, 1529-30; cf. Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 164. Isfahani, Tarikh, p. 170 states that in 250/864-65, al-Ḥasan b. Zayd succeeded in expelling Sulaymān from the whole of Ṭabaristān.
2. Ḥawziyya were groups of isolated people who refused to mix with others. Aḥmad Ruḍā, II, 194.
3. Tab., III, 1530; Miskawayh, VI, 573.
4. Ibn Isfandiyar, pp. 165-70.
5. Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 169, adds that Sulaymān fled from his palace and sent a courtier to Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir in Khurāsān asking for reinforcements.

the only legitimate ruler. Meanwhile, he prepared his forces to meet Sulaymān b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir and his troops who were now marching against him. Al-Ḥasan and his troops moved into Sāriya,¹ the former headquarters of Sulaymān, and began to assume authority over the whole of the province. Therefore al-Ḥasan entered Sāriya with his troops and made it his own headquarters.² The entry of al-Ḥasan b. Zayd into Sāriya meant the end of the 'Abbāsid rule in that city and the whole of Ṭabaristān fell into al-Ḥasan's hands. He did not only confine his activities to this region; immediately after this victory he sent one of his relatives with troops to invade the important city of Rayy which was eventually brought under the control of the Ṭālibiyyin of Ṭabaristān. By invading Rayy, al-Ḥasan b. Zayd extended his jurisdiction as far as Hamadhān.³ And when the news of his manoeuvres and military achievements reached Samarra, the Caliph al-Musta'īn immediately ordered Ismā'īl b. Farāsha to take command of the imperial troops and go to Hamadhān, where he was to remain and so prevent a possible invasion by al-Ḥasan's troops.⁴

It is noteworthy that the Caliph's instructions to the

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1. Sāriya was the residence and centre of the Ṭāhirids' activities in Ṭabaristān. Yaqut, Buldan, III, 10; Le Strange, p. 370.
 2. Tab., III, 1530-31; Miskawayh, VI, 574; Ibn Isfandiyar, pp. 170-71; Yaqut, Buldan, III, 10.
 3. Hamadhān, in the province of Jibāl, was to become the capital of this region under the Persian Saljuqs. Yaqut, Buldan, IV, 981-92; Le Strange, p. 186.
 4. Tab., III, 1531.

leaders of his army were not offensive but rather defensive in character. This would imply that the Caliph was in such a weak position that he was unable even to oppose his own dangerous enemy or, in other words, al-Musta'in seems to have been unwilling to enter into any direct confrontation with his enemy al-Hasan b. Zayd. Al-Ṭabarī explains these limitations which were placed on Ibn Farāsha as being due to the fact that the area beyond Hamadhān was under the control of the Ṭāhirids, where they were left to enforce their own policy, and, now, to protect their own authority as well.¹ But even if this was so, it did not prevent the Caliph from co-operating with the Ṭāhirids who in reality were only the deputies of the Caliph in the region, to put an end to their common enemy because a threat to the Ṭāhirids' position effectively meant a challenge to the 'Abbāsids' authority. If the Caliph had been in a position which enabled him to make a positive move against his rival he would have done so, no matter whether his agents, the Ṭāhirids, were there or not. But if one looks carefully at the situation in the Capital, one can see the real reason why the Caliph gave such orders to his general Ismā'il b. Farāsha.

Rayy came under the control of al-Hasan b. Zayd who had delegated the affairs of the city to one of his relatives known as Muḥammad b. Ja'far,² who was ill-natured and whose

1. Tab., III, 1534.

2. Cf. Isfahani, Tarikh, p. 170. He considered Muḥammad b. Ja'far a rebel who rose up against the 'Abbāsids, in other words, the Ṭāhirids, in Dhū al-Qi'da, 250/December-January 865-866 during the governorship of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir.

policy soon provoked the anger and hatred of the natives. Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir took advantage of this resentment, sending his troops under the leadership of Muḥammad b. Mīkāl. After fierce fighting, Ibn Mīkāl eventually succeeded in capturing Muḥammad b. Ja'far and entered the city, bringing it once again under the domination of the 'Abbāsids. But shortly after this interim victory, al-Ḥasan b. Zayd sent troops to the area, who murdered Muḥammad b. Mīkāl and regained control of the city.¹ Al-Ṭabarī refers to a revolt in the city directed by the two 'Alid pretenders who challenged the forces of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir, the latter fleeing to Qazwīn.² But al-Ṭabarī does not mention whether these 'Alids were in allegiance with al-Ḥasan b. Zayd or not, nor the reason behind their revolt. It is obvious that they were seeking prestige and power by taking advantage of the weak position of the Caliph and the continuous trouble in the capital Samarra, which factors enabled them to achieve their ambitions. There was much doubt concerning their co-operation with Muḥammad b. Zayd because each was intending to strengthen his own position and gain more territorial power. Al-Ṭabarī also presents an abstract of a letter from Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir informing the Caliph al-Musta'īn of his victory over the forces of al-Ḥasan b. Zayd in Rayy, this letter arriving in the Capital in 251/865.³

1. Tab., III, 1532; Miskawayh, VI, 574; Kamil, VII, 81-82.

2. Tab., III, 1533, 1585. Qazwīn was a famous city between Rayy and Abhar. Yaqut, Buldan, IV, 88-91.

3. Tab., III, 1586.

In Rabi' I 251/May 866, another revolt broke out in the region of Qazwin and Zanjān¹ under the command of al-Husayn b. Ahmad b. Ismā'īl b. Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Arqaṭ b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. al-Husayn b. 'Alī b. Abī Tālib, known as Kawkabī, who succeeded in seizing control over the area and expelling the governor of the Tāhirids.² When the Caliph, al-Mu'tazz, learned about the situation in the area, he ordered Mūsā b. Bughā to march there with the Caliph's troops. The Caliph instructed his general to co-operate in his military manoeuvres with the forces of the local ruler who knew the character of the province better than Mūsā and his troops.³ Al-Ṭabarī does not describe the consequences of this action but one of our later historians, Ibn Junghūl, states that the army which was sent by al-Mu'tazz achieved the objects of the campaign after a short fight with the rebel in Dhū al-Qi'da 253/December 867. Mūsā then successfully entered Qazwin and peace and security returned to the area.⁴ Moreover, this victory was of great importance to the Caliph of Samarra because it brought back the authority and sovereignty of the 'Abbāsids to the region. In regaining

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1. The city of Zanjān lay about fifty miles to the north west of Abhar and was on the Zanjān river which flowed west to the Safid Rud. It was on the high road into Adharbayjān. Yaqut, Buldan, II, 948-49; Le Strange, p.222.
 2. Tab., III, 1643; Isfahani, Tarikh, p. 170; Maqatil does not mention this revolt.
 3. Isfahani, Tarikh, p. 170, believes that Mūsā b. Bughā was sent by Muḥammad b. Tāhir.
 4. Ibn Junghūl, III, 284a-b.

control of the area, the Caliph was encouraged to take further steps against his rivals in Ṭabaristān and other adventurers in the nearby regions.

Shortly after this, Mūsā b. Bughā had the courage to put down another revolt which had broken out in Hamadhān under the leadership of 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Abī Ḍalaf who had been the agent of the Caliph in the area until he realised the Caliph's weak position and decided to challenge the 'Abbāsids' authority in order to achieve a kind of autonomy for the area, under his own control. This new adventurer failed, however, to achieve any of his objectives and fled from the forces of Mūsā when they threatened his position. When his followers saw what had happened to their leader they scattered to various districts and showed no further opposition to Mūsā's troops when they entered the city.¹ This easy victory encouraged Mūsā and his forces to advance towards Ṭabaristān and put an end to al-Ḥasan b. Zayd.

In considering al-Ḥasan b. Zayd's position it is evident that his power increased noticeably in Ṭabaristān, Daylam and the surrounding provinces,² despite his recent defeat at the hands of Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ṭāhir according to al-Ṭabarī's account. In 255/868-69 Muflīḥ, one of the Turkish leaders, was sent by the Caliph, al-Mu'tazz, to reinforce Mūsā's troops and to co-operate with him in an

1. Tab., III, 1686; Al-'Aynī, XVII, Part 2, 31a.

2. Ibn Isfandiyar, pp. 177-78.

attempt to end the trouble in Ṭabaristān.¹ Muflīh's forces opposed the troops of al-Ḥasan b. Zayd with a fierce battle and succeeded in breaking down their resistance. Al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, under pressure from his enemy, was forced to abdicate his position in the area of Ṭabaristān, Therefore, Muflīh was able to enter Amul, the centre of the resistance, and burn the houses of al-Ḥasan b. Zayd who fled to Daylam, whence the former had also returned.² The Daylamites, being afraid of Muflīh, abandoned al-Ḥasan b. Zayd but at this juncture Muflīh received orders from Mūsā b. Bughā to return at once, which he did. So the citizens of the area once again began to gather together around al-Ḥasan b. Zayd, and they brought him back to Amul on 22 Ramaḍān 255/September 869.³

The Caliphs, having also to cope with the explosive situation in the Capital, were unable to maintain their authority over Ṭabaristān, Daylam and the surrounding provinces which came under the control of Ḥasan b. Zayd. The separation of Ṭabaristān from the rest of the Empire came to be considered the establishment of the first 'Alid dynasty in the area. This new rule no doubt came at the expense of the 'Abbāsids' authority because their internal conflicts prevented them from retaining their power in that region. But even with the establishment of an 'Alid dynasty the rulers did not proclaim their right to the Caliphate.

1. Cf. Ibn Isfandiyar who gives various reasons which could have led to the despatch of these troops. It deals with the death of one of Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir's agents.

2. Tab., III, 1698; Sibṭ, IX, 291a; Ibn Isfandiyar, pp. 179-80; Ibn Kathir, XI, 15.

3. Tab., III, 1738; Ibn Isfandiyar, p. 181.

2. Sīstān¹

Sīstān had been the centre of the Kharijites' activities since the early establishment of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate. The Kharijites were not only Arabs, a considerable number of Iranian people also being found among them.² According to Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān, this region had stopped sending revenue to the Caliph before the period under consideration.³ Sīstān was included in the appanage of the Tāhirids and was therefore ruled directly by them. It remained the focus of the Kharijites' revolts and disturbed the security of the whole province. Their activities were on the increase and grew more effective with the waning power of the central government generally and the Tāhirids in particular. The natives, on the other hand, had probably lost confidence in the ability of the 'Abbāsid Caliphs and their agents in the area, the Tāhirids, to protect them from the continuous raids of the Kharijites which were always accompanied by fear and panic among the inhabitants of the region. Therefore they

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1. Sīstān, which the earlier Arabs called Sigistan from the Persian Sagistan, was part of the surrounding lowland country and to the east of the Zarah lake, which more especially includes the deltas of the Helmund and other rivers which drain into this inland sea. Sīstān was also called Nimruz in Persian meaning 'Mid-day', or the southern land, a name said to have been applied to the province in regard to its position to the south of Khurāsān. Iṣṭakhrī, p. 249; Ibn Hawqal, p. 301; Yaqut, Buldan, III, 41-45.
 2. For details of the Kharijites' revolts in Sīstān during the early 'Abbāsid period see C.E. Bosworth, Sīstān under the Arabs, Chapter IV and V.
 3. Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān, pp. 156-57; C.E. Bosworth, p. 94.

organised their own military bodyguard, calling them mutṭawwi'a (volunteers)¹ and they took the initiative in maintaining security and peace in the region by suppressing the Kharijites.

This volunteer army was under the command of Ṣāliḥ b. Naḍr or Naṣr al-Kinānī,² whose power was strengthened by the joint forces of Ya'qūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār.³ Together they succeeded in quelling the trouble in Bust,⁴ and in 239/854, brought it under their control instead of that of the Ṭāhirids,⁵ but they were not in a position to retain permanent control of the city.⁶ The great obstacle to this

1. Professor Bosworth states that it was mainly 'Ayyārūn who composed the body of this army. C.E. Bosworth, Sīstān under the Arabs, p. 122.
2. Wafayat, II, 312. According to Ibn Khaldūn he was one of the descendents of ahl al-bayt. Ibar, III, 293-4.
3. C.E. Bosworth, 'The armies of the Ṣaffārids', BSOAS, XXXI, 1968, p. 539. According to M. Forstener there was no form of co-operation between Ya'qūb and Ṣāliḥ but, on the contrary, Ṣāliḥ was Ya'qūb's rival and several fights took place between the two. Eventually Ya'qūb succeeded in having Ṣāliḥ captured in 249/864. M. Forstener, 'Ya'qūb b. al-Layth und der Zunbīl', ZDMG, CXX, 1970, p. 74.
4. Bust was the second largest city of Sīstān in the 4th (10th) century. Its people were living in comfortable circumstances and are described as dressing after the fashion of the men of Iraq and as being for the most part merchants who traded with India. The neighbouring lands were extremely fertile, growing dates and grapes, and Bust was accounted the chief town of all the mountainous country of eastern Sīstān. Balādhurī, pp. 555, 561, 565; Iṣṭakhrī, pp. 244, 245, 248; Ibn Ḥawqal, pp. 302, 304; Yaqut, Buldan, I, 612-30; Le Strange, pp. 344-45.
5. Wafayat, II, 312.
6. Isfahani, Tarikh, p. 169.

was the legitimate governor of Sīstān appointed by the Tāhirids, Ibrāhīm b. al-Ḥusayn al-Qusī who had ruled the province with reasonable success for fourteen years. Ibrāhīm was aware that Bust was a permanent focus of disaffection and disturbances which often spread subsequently into Sīstān. Therefore, his first move was to send his son Muḥammad into the city with an army. At first the fortunes of war favoured Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm and forced Ṣāliḥ to abandon his attempt to maintain his power in the city and flee into the desert. But the latter soon reorganised his army and eventually compelled Muḥammad to leave the city.¹ According to Ibn Khallikān Tāhir b. 'Abd Allāh, the governor of Khurāsān made a successful attack on these troops and forced them to relinquish their control of the city, their leader Ṣāliḥ b. al-Naṣr or Naḍr dying immediately afterwards.² The leadership was transferred to one of his active officers named Dirham b. Naṣr who, from the increase in the number of his supporters despite the recent defeat of their forces,³ seems to have been popular among the volunteers.⁴ Moreover, Dirham became the de facto Amir of Sīstān for the next three years (244-247/858-861). During this period a gradual estrangement grew between Dirham and Ya'qūb due to the latter's

1. Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān, pp. 193-200; C.E. Bosworth, pp.117-8.

2. Wafayat, II, 312; cf. Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān, p. 199.

3. Iṣṭakhri, Kitab al-Aqālīm, p. 120 does not mention the role of Ṣāliḥ b. Naṣr and considers Dirham to be the first leader of the volunteer army which succeeded in controlling Sīstān.

4. Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān, p. 199; Ibar, III, 294.

obviously superior bravery and ability as a leader. The final break is ascribed here to the attempt by the jealous Dirham to assassinate Ya'qūb, Dirham having become so fearful for his own safety that he feigned illness and remained enclosed in his house in Zaranj.¹ According to Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān, the plot failed and some fighting followed, out of which Ya'qūb emerged victorious and was recognised as Amir of Sīstān on 25 Muḥarram 247/10 April 861.² But al-Iṣfahānī in his Ta'rīkh, (p. 169), considers that Dirham was the chief leader of the volunteers during the short reign of al-Muntaṣir, and Ya'qūb al-Ṣaffār his main subordinate. Since the latter proved himself a more efficient leader than Dirham, the combatants relied on Ya'qūb, and this attitude led Dirham to abdicate his position, offering it to Ya'qūb and leaving the army.³ Our historical chronicles do not present clear

1. Zaranj or Zarang was the capital of Sīstān during the Middle Ages. In the third (ninth) century it was strongly fortified, consisting of an inner town surrounded by a wall having five gates beyond which were the suburbs of the outer town, enclosed by the outer wall, which had thirteen gates, these latter opening across a great moat filled by springs and by the overflow of the canals. Le Strange, pp. 335-340.
2. Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān, pp. 179-200; Wafayat, II, 317; C.E. Bosworth, pp. 117-118.
3. Ibn al-Athīr states that Tāhir b. 'Abd Allāh the governor of Khurāsān, was carefully watching the situation in Sīstān and in order to retain his control in the area, in one of his treacherous plots, he succeeded in having Dirham captured and sent in chains to Baghdad where he remained in prison for a period of time. The volunteers, however, honoured Ya'qūb b. al-Layth al-Ṣaffār by choosing him as their leader. Kamil, VII, 124.

details of this event but Ibn al-Athīr in his Kamil, (VII, 43), gives the same account as al-Isfahānī.

It is noteworthy that despite the agitated politico-military situation in the eastern provinces of the Empire, the Caliphs seem to have remained aloof from it. This was probably due to the continuous struggle for power among the 'Abbāsids which prevented them from solving the troubles in the provinces. The weak position of the Caliphs and their agents the Ṭāhirids encouraged these rebels to exert their power and domination.¹ Therefore, in 248/862 Ya'qūb started his military campaign by advancing towards Harāt² threatening the position of the Ṭāhirids in the whole region.³ In 253/867 Ya'qūb met the forces of Muḥammad b. Aws, who was the agent of the Ṭāhirids in Harāt and, after heavy fighting

1. D. Sourdel, " 'Abbasid Caliphate", CHI., I, 129.

2. Harāt was a great city in the province of Khurāsān consisting of a citadel surrounded by a wall with four gates. The city measured half a league square and the government house was at a place called Khurāsānabād, a mile outside the town on the western road towards Fushanj. At each of the four city gates within the town was a market. Le Strange, pp. 407-09.

3. Tab., III, 1500. E.G. Browne regards Ya'qūb's manoeuvres as a revival of Persian independence. Moreover, he also considers him as having strong Shī'ite leanings. E.G. Browne, A Literary History, I, 346, 349; cf. C.E. Bosworth, "Notes on the pre-Ghaznavid history of Eastern Afghanistan", IQ, IX, 1965, pp. 22-23. Moreover, C.E. Bosworth in his recent article, "The Armies of the Ṣaffārīds" ESOAS, XXXI, 1968, pp. 535-36 considers the mistrust and hatred which Ya'qūb held towards the 'Abbāsids as the main reason for his expansion of power at their expense.

al-Ṣaffār won the battle and entered the city.¹ This victory was of great importance to al-Ṣaffār because it strengthened his control over the area and decreased the danger from his main opponents, the Ṭāhirids. Furthermore, it encouraged Ya'qūb to extend his authority to the other settlements in the vicinity in order to challenge the Ṭāhirids' power and ultimately put an end to their uncertain rule in Khurāsān. Ibn al-Athīr states that this victory spread fear and panic not only among the Ṭāhirids but also among the nearby governors whose positions were threatened by the emergence of Ya'qūb's power.²

In spite of this defeat which badly affected the 'Abbāsids' authority in the eastern provinces, the Caliphs of Samarra, physically distant from this agitated situation, were always engaged in attempting to solve the continuous trouble in the capital. Moreover, it appears from the text of a later historian that immediately after this victory, the Caliph al-Mu'tazz recognised Ya'qūb as the legitimate ruler of Harāt and Sīstān.³ This could be considered as

1. Tab., III, 1698; Kamil, VII, 124; Wafayat, II, 312-13; Nujum, II, 326-27; Ibar, III, 294.

2. Kamil, VII, 125; M. Forstener indicates that Ya'qūb moved towards the Turkish tribes who lived in the region of Sīstān and brought it under his authority after the murder of its king Zunbīl and several of its generals. M. Forstener, "Ya'qūb b. Laiṭ und der Zunbīl", ZDMG, CXX, 1970, p. 71.

3. Ibar, III, 294; cf. Barthold, p. 217. H. Bowen suggests that the authority of the Ṭāhirids was challenged by a brigand who had succeeded in gaining control of the whole of the province of Sīstān. The Ṭāhirids' ruler attempted to buy him off with a governorship but this only encouraged him to undertake more ambitious enterprises. H. Bowen, p. 8.

the main factor in encouraging al-Ṣaffār to extend his authority to include other provinces. Ibn al-Ṭaḡṭaḡā states that al-Mu'tazz was believed to have adopted a lenient attitude towards al-Ṣaffār because of his delicate position in the capital,¹ and by this policy the Caliph would possibly hope to protect his capital from the danger of this energetic war-lord who had succeeded in bringing to his side a large body of fighters. On the other hand, if this report were true, the Caliph then apparently would not have objected to the emergence of any new power in the area so long as it remained faithful to Samarra by sending the annual revenue and mentioning the Caliph in the Friday prayer and in the monetary system. Ibn al-Athīr states that al-Ṣaffār remained loyal to the Caliph al-Mu'tazz and always corresponded with him. He even pretended that the Caliph himself ordered him to fight the Kharijites.²

It is noteworthy that even the Caliph had no intention of sending any forces against the rebel in Sīstān which was a matter of great interest if we compare his attitude towards this revolt with those of the other provinces in which the Caliphs always tried to crush the trouble at any cost. It may be suggested that the Caliph al-Mu'tazz, realising his weak position and inability to retain absolute 'Abbāsid authority in Sīstān by opposing Ya'qūb, recognised Ya'qūb as the legitimate ruler of the province in order to maintain a quasi-'Abbāsid influence over the region. Thus, he was

1. Fakhri, p. 181.

2. Kamil, VII, 125. Ibn Khallikān speaks about the valuable presents which were sent by Ya'qūb to this Caliph.

Wafayat, II, 313.

returning to the same policy which had been adopted by the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd towards North Africa when the latter in 184/800 realised that he was unable to maintain the integrity of his Empire, and therefore acknowledged the Aghlabids' authority, who in turn continued to send the annual revenue to the Capital - a matter of great importance to the Caliph. The Caliph's attitude towards Ya'qūb Ibn al-Layth may have encouraged the latter to extend his authority over the surrounding provinces,¹ as shortly after, the Caliph bestowed on Ya'qūb the governorship of Fars.

1. For Ya'qūb's military activities in the east see M. Forstener, "Ya'qūb b. Laith und der Zunbil", ZDMG, CXX, 1970, pp. 69-83.

3. Fārs.¹

Like Sīstān, Fārs was included in the appanage of the Tāhirids and came under their direct rule. Since that time they had always sent their agents to the area in order to maintain their supremacy which in one way or another directly affected the supremacy of the Caliphate. While Ya'qūb was engaged in extending his authority in Sīstān and other provinces at the expense of the Tāhirids, a revolt broke out in 249/863 in the vicinity of Fārs, led by the jund of the province themselves.² This revolt seriously affected the position of the Tāhirids because it was mainly directed against the governor al-Ḥusayn b. Khālīd, who was the deputy of Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir. Moreover, it diverted the attention of the Tāhirids from the increasing power of Ya'qūb who obviously could be considered the main source of opposition to the Tāhirids. The jund, however, confiscated a sum of money which was on its way to Samarra and from which the rebels took their own arzāq.³ The rebels organised themselves under the leadership of 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn b. Quraysh

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1. Fārs is the arabicised form of Pars which itself was derived from Parsa, the Persis of the Greeks. It was one of the famous eastern provinces of the Empire. Shīrāz was the capital of the province and 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn made it his headquarters. EI², s.v. Fārs; Le Strange, pp. 248-98.
 2. Tab., III, 1534, includes the shākiriyya in this revolt who together with the jund succeeded in plundering the house of 'Abd Allāh b. Ishāq and in killing a person known as Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Qārim while 'Abd Allāh escaped safely from their hands. Cf. Yaqubi, III, 183.
 3. Yaqubi, III, 183.

al-Bukhārī whose help enabled them to expel the ruler of Fārs, al-Husayn b. Khālīd, and set up their own independent governor away from the Tāhirids' influence. When Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Tāhir came to know of the inflammatory situation in Fārs and the expulsion of his agent he immediately and openly deplored such an action, designating one of his men known as 'Abd Allāh b. Ishāq as governor of the province. Ibn Tāhir ordered the new ruler to march with his troops to the area at once and suppress the revolt by severely punishing the chief of the outlaws. As soon as the jund learned about the success of the new governor and his strong support they returned to their own settlements, submitting themselves to the new and powerful ruler. 'Abd Allāh b. Ishāq had no intention of placing heavy restrictions on the citizens but intended rather to punish their leader; therefore he accepted the loyalty of the jund. Then he placed 'Alī b. al-Husayn under arrest for a certain period of time but later released him.¹

Once again Fārs came under the direct rule of the Tāhirids whose position was somewhat reinforced in the area by this victory. But their power did not last long in the province and eventually the rebels in Fārs succeeded in separating themselves from the Tāhirids. This was mainly due to the policy of 'Abd Allāh b. Ishāq who entrusted 'Alī b. al-Husayn with the mission and sent him out to fight

1. Yaqubi, III, 183.

against the Kharijites in the border area between Fārs and Kirmān.¹ Ibn Ishāq probably thought that the easiest way to rid himself of 'Alī b. al-Husayn was by sending him to fight the Kharijites. But 'Alī could not overcome his desire for power and prestige; therefore during his advance to the border area he corresponded with a few of his followers in Fārs, informing them that he intended to revolt against the new governor. The jund, however, immediately associated themselves with 'Alī due to the tyranny of 'Abd Allāh b. Ishāq who had refused to give them their own arzāq. 'Alī then went ahead with his intrigue and instead of continuing his progress towards the Kharijites' area he returned to Fārs intending to end Ibn Ishāq's rule in the province. When 'Abd Allāh b. Ishāq learned about this plot he fled to Baghdad leaving the province without a ruler. By so doing he encouraged 'Alī to fulfil his main objective: to march on the area and take control of it. As soon as he entered Fārs, the jund once again recognised 'Alī as governor of the province. When the news of this grave situation reached Baghdad, the Tāhirids reacted strongly, deploring the cruel treatment of their legitimate agent. Moreover, the governor of Baghdad sent one of his men known as Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. Naṣr b. Hamza al-Khuzā'ī to lead the troops against the rebel. Even with these troops the Tāhirids failed to re-impose their authority on Fārs; but on the other hand, the

1. Kirmān was an extensive province located between Fārs, Maqrān, Sīstān and Khurāsān. It was famous for its various kinds of agricultural products. Yaqut, Buldan, IV, 263-266.

rebel was not able to achieve a decisive victory over his enemy either. Thus, clashes between the two hostile forces continued for some time, weakening the policy of both and offering more opportunities, as will be discussed below, for the other war-lord,¹ Ya'qūb b. Layth to seize power in Fārs and expel 'Alī together with the Tāhirids. Surprisingly enough our sources do not mention the role of the Tāhirids in Khurāsān in this conflict and why they did not send troops to reinforce the Baghdadi army. They were probably involved in quelling the uprisings in the surrounding area of Khurāsān and other provinces.

'Alī's manoeuvres proved once again that the 'Abbāsids were continually losing control of the provinces despite the sincere and reliable policy of their representatives in these regions. The Tāhirids, who were the target of these rebels and who were eventually vanquished by them, were not strong enough to suppress all the uprisings. Therefore, they regretfully decreased their hold over these provinces while the war-lords enthusiastically continued their military campaigns in order to extend their authority and become the rulers of the provinces over which they had been exerting their military power. The serious conflict in Samarra was the main reason for the disintegration of the Muslim Empire, the continuous struggle for power between the Caliphs and their Turkish officers preventing the Caliphs from co-operating with their agents, the Tāhirids, in order to gain

1. Yaqubi, III, 183.

control of the area. Moreover, this conflict offered many opportunities to the war-lords to extend their interests on the political scene, terminating in the establishment of several semi-independent states in various provinces, particularly under the command of non-Arab leaders. It must be borne in mind that neither the rebels in Fārs nor any of the non-Arab elements intended to set up a state fully independent of the core of the Empire. They were only eager to hold positions of power in their own vicinity, and whenever they found an opportunity to extend their control to the surrounding area they tried to do this, not at the expense of the 'Abbāsids' dignity, but rather at that of the other local officers. On the other hand, the war-lords always maintained their traditional loyalty to the Caliphs of Samarra which enabled them to retain these positions of authority. Professor W.M. Watt believes that the war-lords were men who came to rule in their own right. Though the Caliph was powerless against them, they were content, in theory, to be his subordinates. Perhaps they felt that this strengthened their position by giving their rule an appearance of legitimacy.¹

It must be remembered, too, that by now there were four rival rulers in the eastern provinces who were competing against each other in an attempt to extend their authority. The Tāhirids, who were the legitimate deputies of the Caliph, proved to be the greater losers although they had the burden of maintaining security and the integration of

1. W.M. Watt, Islamic Political Thought, p. 100.

the Empire. Their delicate position did not help them in providing a continuous supply of armed forces in order to be able to rule efficiently. When they failed to achieve this object their power collapsed under pressure from these new adventurers.

In Fārs and Sīstān there was competition between 'Alī b. Husayn and Ya'qūb al-Ṣaffār whose power now seemed to exceed even that of the Tāhirids. It must be borne in mind that both 'Alī and Ya'qūb sought the Caliph's acknowledgement of their rule in the region of Fārs. It is reported that 'Alī sent a message to the Caliph al-Mu'tazz informing him of the critical situation in the eastern provinces which had arisen as a direct consequence of the weak efforts of the Tāhirids who could not even maintain their power over Sīstān and Harāt which consequently fell under the direct rule of Ya'qūb al-Ṣaffār. 'Alī asked the Caliph to authorise him to take over the governorship of Kirmān as well as the province of Fārs over which he was already exercising his control.¹ Meanwhile, Ya'qūb al-Ṣaffār had sent a letter to the Caliph asking him to grant him the rulership of Kirmān. The Caliph, who had not enough power to combat these adventurers, found an opportunity to play them off one against the other; no matter who succeeded, the Caliph was the real winner. Therefore he sent a message to both of them, simultaneously recognizing their power in the same province, Kirmān.²

As soon as Ya'qūb received the Caliph's message

1. Tab., III, 1698; Sibṭ, IX, 286a.

2. Tab., III, 1698; Sibṭ, IX, 286a; Kamil, VII, 128.

indicating acknowledgement of his authority over Kirmān, he marched with his combatants towards the area. When 'Alī b. Ḥusayn, who also received a message from the Caliph, learned about Ya'qūb's manoeuvres he immediately despatched his army under the command of one of his officers known as Ṭaḥwq b. al-Mughallīs. 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn possibly regarded Ya'qūb's campaign as a challenge to his authority in Kirmān which had been granted to him by the Caliph himself. Therefore, Ṭaḥwq b. al-Mughallīs moved towards the city of Kirmān, under the instructions of 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, preceeding Ya'qūb's troops and entering the city before the arrival of his enemy. When Ya'qūb heard about this move he stationed his army at some distance from the city, avoiding any direct confrontation with the invaders and after a while Ya'qūb succeeded in entering the city, in taking Ṭaḥwq captive and in extending his authority to include Kirmān.¹ It is obvious that this victory proved a serious threat to the position of 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn who carefully followed the fortunes of his troops from his headquarters in Shīrāz. As soon as Ya'qūb had settled his affairs in Kirmān he moved with his active army toward Shīrāz in order to crush the remaining power of his rival 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn. Eventually Ya'qūb succeeded in invading Shīrāz and captured his arch enemy 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn.² This victory was of great importance

1. Tab., III, 1699-1700; Sibṭ, IX, 286a.

2. Tab., III, 1702-1705; Kamil, VII, 130-131; cf. Yaqubi, III, 187, who simply states that Ya'qūb became so powerful that he decided to invade Fārs. So he marched with his troops to the area which was under the command of 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Qurayshī, who failed to win a victory over Ya'qūb's forces. 'Alī was captured after his defeat and Ya'qūb entered Fārs with his troops.

to Ya'qūb who successfully extended his authority to include the eastern provinces of Fārs and Kirmān. In order to gain approval for his authority from the Caliph, al-Ṣaffār as usual sent valuable presents to the capital,¹ which was probably the easiest means to gain the Caliph's support. But al-Ṭabarī mentions that in 256/870, in the early days of al-Mu'tamid's reign, a revolt broke out in Fārs against the Caliph's agent, al-Ḥārith b. Sīmā al-Sharābī, who was murdered at the hands of the rebels,² which shows that Ya'qūb al-Ṣaffār did not continue his rule over Fārs. On the other hand, Ya'qūb continued his expansionist policy and succeeded in 259/873 in invading Nīshābūr, taking prisoner Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir.³ But eventually al-Ṣaffār met the Caliph's army in 262/876 and lost the battle which led to his final downfall in 265/879.

Ya'qūb al-Ṣaffār succeeded eventually in establishing his authority in the eastern provinces of Sīstān, Kirmān and Fārs in addition to his successful raids and expansion in Kābul which resulted in the spread of the Islamic faith to this latter region. The main reasons which encouraged him to exercise this power was the weak position of the Caliphs together with their representatives in the area, the Ṭāhirids and his hatred of the 'Abbāsīd family.

The 'Abbāsīd dynasty seems to have been on the point of collapse as a result of the continuous revolts in the

1. Tab., III, 1706; D. Sourdel, "Abbāsīd Caliphate", CHI, I, 129.

2. Tab., III, 1839; Ibar, III, 294-95, 308.

3. Tab., III, 1880-82; Kamil, VII, 180-81.

provinces. The main factors which led to these uprisings were the struggle for power among the 'Abbāsids which weakened their solidarity and prevented them from maintaining peace and order throughout the Empire, and the introduction of Turks into the army. This decade marked the beginning of the disintegration of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate which, immediately after this period, was confined to the region of Iraq and held little or no responsibility for the other areas, despite the religious respect for the Caliphs felt throughout the Empire.

The Caliphs had dealt with the revolts in various ways, depending on the background of the leaders of the uprisings, the strategy employed by them and the economic importance of the area concerned. In order to maintain their direct influence, the Caliphs tried their best to suppress any revolts in the provinces which were of great importance to the capital and were mostly inhabited by Arabs. When a province came under the leadership of a non-Arab, the Caliph granted that leader a kind of autonomy for his own region; such was the case of Ibn Ṭūlūn in Egypt. As far as the remote regions were concerned, the Caliphs of the period followed the policy of their predecessors, offering the local leaders the right to govern their area on the condition that they continued to send the revenue to the Capital and included their names in the Friday prayer and on all coins. These local leaders indeed needed the recognition of the Caliphs in order to gain the support of their subjects who still believed that the Caliph was the supreme leader of the Empire.

CONCLUSION

This decade of anarchy has always been regarded as a sort of interregnum in the history of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate and the occupants of the office treated as de-personalised puppets, undeserving of sympathy or attention. In many respects, the study of the period supports this opinion: it produced no single individual of outstanding value or ability; it put forward no new ideas which could be of influence in the future and it degraded the very foundations on which the Islamic Empire was presumed to rest. But, despite all this, it did have a cautionary lesson for succeeding generations; and, when seen in the context of 'Abbāsid policies since the foundation of the dynasty, there was a certain inevitability in the troubles it experienced.

The wholesale importation of men of nomadic background, who had no commitment to the society and were unable to share its ideals, could not but be a potential threat to the stability of the community; and when the ruler actually chose to base his authority on such elements it could be no longer in doubt that some such anarchy would eventually result. In seeking the origins of this troubled period one should, first, look to the dynasty itself and to the reasons why it could not feel secure in the support of people who had brought it to power.

The common assumption that the 'Abbāsid revolution fundamentally changed the basis of rule in the Islamic state has little foundation in fact and, actually, in respect of a

dynastic principle which would assure the continuity of government, the family was little different from the Umayyads. Whereas with the latter the constant intrigues of pretenders to the throne exploited tribal alliances and antipathies, no less did the claimants within the 'Abbāsid family foment and employ the ambitions and fears of the elements on which the new state had first established itself. Despite the emphasis that was to be placed on the Caliphs' rôle as Imām as well as Amīr al-Mu'minīn and the introduction of a formal protocol into the life of the court, the patent of supreme authority was still a military power sufficient to intimidate rivals, and when this power could no longer be secured from within the state itself it was felt necessary to recruit it from outside.

Had a strict discipline been imposed on these slave troops, and had their functions in the state organization been clearly defined, they might have been a more constant and reliable element within the military establishment. However, since the time of their first introduction they had been treated as the Caliph's private possession, which he jealously guarded against any attempt at incorporation into the society. They were conditioned to respect him alone, but when he showed himself as weak and vain, and incapable of commanding respect, they were left without any true master and, indeed, without any true purpose. In this way their aimlessness and confusion were to be exploited by their own self-seeking captains and generals and they themselves were as much victims of the disorders as its authors. *the*

The real source of these disorders was the struggle for power within the 'Abbāsid family and this had been going on to some extent since the inception of the dynasty. However, it was al-Munṭaṣir who demonstrated to the Turks the lack of any family cohesion within the dynasty, when he solicited their support for the murder of his own father. It would have been strange had they not read the lesson that this implied and begun to realise the extent of the power that had been placed in their hands. They were confirmed in this awareness by the behaviour of al-Munṭaṣir once he had achieved the Caliphate; the treatment he meted out to his brothers - always with their consent and connivance - could not but diminish any respect for him that might have remained. Al-Musta'īn proved no different in the callous treatment to which he was prepared to subject his own relatives in order to secure his *future*, and, like his predecessor, he was ready to indulge the Turks in whatever they wished, to enlist their co-operation.

With al-Mu'tazz the degradation of the 'Abbāsids reached its nadir. With the murder of one brother, al-Mu'ayyad, and the banishment of the other, al-Muwaffaq - the latter who had actually been his ally in the struggle with al-Musta'īn - he showed himself deaf to all appeals except to his own personal interests. Nor did his successor, al-Muhtadī, conceive his rôle as Caliph as other than a personal gratification; he had been implicated in plots with the Turkish officers against al-Mu'tazz, and on becoming Caliph he behaved no differently towards his family than had the

latter. Al-Mu'tamid, but for the fact that his brother al-Muwaffaq seized the effective control of the state and deprived him of a voice in its operations, would probably have been no different. His reign marks the realisation on the part of the 'Abbāsid family of what this anarchy would ultimately imply for themselves; and it is indicative of how superficial was the power that the Turks held that within a period of a few years it could be almost totally eliminated, and the prestige of the dynasty restored.

One may reasonably ask why in this troubled decade in which neither the person nor the dignity of the Caliph was shown even token respect by his own minions, the office was allowed to remain within the 'Abbāsid family and not transferred to one or another of the various pretenders to the Caliphate, or even to one of their own leaders. The answer must be, of course, the religious significance which the office had acquired in the century of its existence within this one dynasty, and the influence it exercised over large sections of the population. Thus, though the Turks themselves might have nothing but contempt for the Caliphs, whom they were juggling to their own caprice, it was only through their agency that they were able to extend their authority over the community as a whole. They were not seeking a revolution, nor did their protests proceed from any deep sense of grievance; they took advantage of the weakness that had befallen the Caliphate, and it was wholly in their own interests that this weakness should be maintained by filling the office with venial, intimidated men who could

be co-erced into acting as accomplices in their own self-seeking.

Nor is there anything to suggest that the Turks had any conception of how to use the power they held beyond the satisfaction of transitory ambitions, and these were for the most part provoked by jealousy among themselves. Apart from having the organization of the jund modified so that they might have the benefits of being registered therein, not a single institution of the state was affected by their brief hour of authority. It is true that the confidence of society in these institutions was for a time shaken, but the century over which they had been developed allowed them to gain a strength which could not be sapped by the mischief of the moment. To the extent that the Turks had social ideals, it was probably also in these institutions that they found expression; for the law of the steppe could have little application in the civilized environment of Baghdad and Samarra, even if there had been a uniformity in their tribal backgrounds.

The unity which these Turkish slave troops exhibited from time to time must be regarded as being of a class rather than an ethnic solidarity. Despite the fact that, if only for convenience of arrangement and communication, Turks from the same area, speaking the same dialect must have been barracked together, not one of our sources uses a tribal designation for any of the groups that figured in their activities. The contemporary historians use the name 'Turk', not to identify but rather to differentiate these

intruders from the citizen element in the society; and what further distinctions they might possess among themselves they either did not know or did not think important to mention. From which we might, also, infer that the Turks themselves did not stress their tribal origins so as to impress such names on the minds of the people. When first brought to Iraq as the private army of the Caliph, conscious efforts were made to keep them separate from the people, and this sense of isolation in the society persisted even after they had taken into their own hands all the power of their so-called masters. But because they were permanent strangers in a hostile environment, their very survival demanded that they maintain a degree of unity that would permit of co-operation in matters of mutual concern, and for as long as they were able to behave with some sort of harmony they seemed to thrive.

But the inherent separation among themselves which must have been a legacy of the tribal particularism of which they were the product could not for long permit of such unity, and the stages of the decline of their power can be marked by dissensions among themselves provoked by envy, leading to outright clashes. One could understand more deeply the nature of the alliances and the intrigues among the Turkish generals if some information were available about the composition of their respective followings, and it may be that many of the events that are presented in a purely Iraqi context may have behind them antipathies and loyalties that are a memory of distant tribal attitudes. But this we cannot know; and

the information that survives allows of no valid inferences on this matter.

The policy of the Caliphs to maintain them as an elite corps, distinct from the standing army as well as from the people as a whole, isolated them from any sympathy or support that could have been solicited from these quarters; and their own behaviour as unassimilated intruders into the society was calculated to alienate the feelings of all with whom they were thrown into contact. For, in fact, they were unassimilable and once their presence passed from the precincts of the palace into the body of society it was inevitable that they would either be extruded or destroy this body utterly. In the event, it was they who were rejected, and by this was demonstrated the inherent soundness of the Islamic society which had developed in Iraq during the first century of the 'Abbāsid Caliphate.

In historical perspective it can be said that they were the real casualties of the anarchy which they provoked; only a few of their leaders gained a transitory importance and advantage out of the *melée*, while the majority were left in a state of confusion and insecurity which made them susceptible to the promises and blandishments of these self-seeking men. At no time did they show any awareness that the basic condition for their own continued well-being was a strong and resolute Caliph; and when they lent their support to undermining their masters they were destroying all that gave their existence a purpose and meaning.

This decade made one positive contribution to the Islamic Empire in that it brought an awareness to the Caliphate of the realities of its situation. The provinces, taking advantage of the relaxation of control from the centre, win recognition as the autonomous entities they always were, responsible for their own destinies. The Caliphate, henceforth, will accept only the commitments proper to an Iraqi state; the Caliph will use the prestige of his office to exact all possible tribute and respect from the regions, but rarely will his armies again venture outside the natural boundaries of his home-land, or accept responsibilities beyond the human resources that this could afford. The traumatic experience of the Turkish fitna marks the passing of the grandiose conceptions of empire and the birth of a more modest, but more viable, phase of 'Abbāsid rule.

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